English as a Distant Language:
An Investigation of Teachers' Understanding

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Statement of authorship and sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the Australian Catholic University Human Research and Ethics Committee.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my parents Pat and Ann Gaffney, for their sacrifices and support in placing me on the road of education and learning.

Dedication also to the De La Salle Brothers and all Lasallians who continue to be inspired by the life and teachings of St John Baptist De La Salle, who first recognised that education must be based on the life context of students and not based on the context of those who society privileges.

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Abstract

Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities in countries such as Australia and Papua New Guinea, where English is the language of education, attend primary schools where they learn using English. This study is an investigation of how teachers understand the English environment experience of Indigenous students who live in Traditional language communities and the requirements for their successful learning in English. Most of the research on Indigenous students has concentrated on Indigenous students in general rather than the specific language and learning context of those who live in Traditional language communities. The unique nature of these communities' English language and learning experience requires a specific understanding, rather than a general understanding, for the understanding to be valid and the learning of Traditional language students to be successful.

This study uses grounded theory to investigate teachers' understanding. The process involved the teachers themselves sharing their understanding during interviews, focus groups and critical groups. Most of the teachers who participated in this study were interviewed in the Traditional language communities where they live and work. The majority of the participants were teachers working in schools in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea and the desert region of north-west Australia. The teachers, without exception, observed that the English environment had a very minimal presence in their students' communities and consequently in the lives of their students. They also appreciated the impact of the low profile of English on the learning of their students in school. This study has defined these students' experience of an English environment as an experience of English as a distant language. While teachers had a partial and some shared understanding, there was no comprehensive, collective understanding of the English environment experienced by their students and the requirement for their successful learning in English.

The reporting and coding of the results revealed themes on which these results were based. These themes were used to analyse and discuss the results and the relevant literature. From this discussion, elements emerged for understanding the ways in which

students in Traditional language communities experience English as a distant language. The relationships and connections identified between these elements were discerned as threads to tie these elements together, and to develop a framework for understanding English as a distant language. The development of this framework was an unanticipated outcome of this study. The new understanding in this framework has implications for all those involved in the education of Indigenous students in Traditional language communities. It not only provides the basis for informed understanding, but for the development of strategies that will improve the learning success of Indigenous students attending primary schools in Traditional language communities.

1   Introduction

1.1   Researcher background

Over the last twenty years I have taught Traditional language speakers, who speak the original spoken language of their Indigenous community, in English-medium schools and colleges in South Africa (1993), in Papua New Guinea (1994–2001, 2003–2004) and in an Australian Aboriginal Community (2005–2013). I am a non-Indigenous person of Anglo-Celtic background. During the time I have taught Traditional language speakers I have observed two common features of student language experience in these schools. First, students are Traditional language speakers, learning in English but rarely experiencing English outside of class. Second, the teaching methods used are, basically, methods that have been developed for students with an English-speaking background or English as an Additional Language (EAL) background. By 2005, students who did not speak English as their first language were beginning to be classified as EAL rather than ESL (English as a Second Language) students, as English was often not their second language but their third (or subsequent) language.

In an effort to learn new literacy teaching methods, in the second half of 2001 I began a Masters of Education degree at Australian Catholic University, while teaching in a Sydney school in which the majority of students were English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. The purpose of my study was to discover the EAL methods that could be used for Traditional language speakers who were learning English in primary schools. While the EAL methods and approaches I studied were useful in many ways, EAL seemed to assume that students were experiencing English outside of school; that is, EAL students were presumed to interact with English in their local and regional communities. I recognised that this was a crucial difference between EAL students in general and the students I had taught in Papua New Guinea and South Africa.

In 2003, I returned to Papua New Guinea as a lecturer of language teaching and practicum coordinator at a teachers' college, where we predominantly taught student teachers EAL methods. However, these general EAL methods were better suited to EAL

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students who experienced English outside of school than to the Indigenous students with a Traditional language background who made up the majority of students in Papua New Guinea. At the teachers' college, we were able to teach students about the general nature of EAL students using EAL literature from countries where English was widely experienced in local and regional communities. However, we were unable to present these student teachers with a well-defined understanding of the unique characteristics of students who had a Traditional home language and were learning in English, but had minimal interaction with English in their daily lives. Consequently, the student teachers were surprised and disappointed when they assessed their primary school students' literacy skills as limited. The student teachers did not have a clear appreciation of the limited English experience of primary school students with a Traditional language background, even though the majority of students they would soon teach in Papua New Guinea would come from this context.

In 2005 I began teaching in a school in a remote Australian Aboriginal Community. At this school, and in other similar schools, a mixture of EAL approaches was used, as well as teaching approaches designed for students with an English-speaking background (ESB). Some professional development was provided in teaching approaches developed for Indigenous students who spoke the Aboriginal English dialect as their first language; however, there were very few of these students at the school. Although approaches based on the language experiences of EAL, ESB and Aboriginal English students are to some extent useful for teaching, none of these approaches directly address the language experience of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approaches are also not appropriate for Traditional language students. EFL students have a very different experience of English as they live in countries where English is not the national language or language for schooling and they usually learn English at school in addition to other languages. Some EFL students may study English in an English speaking country but then they return to their home country. (Cummins & Davison, 2007). Thus my experience prior to this study was with teachers of students with a Traditional language background who did not have a common or clear understanding of their students' English experience, or of the appropriate teaching and learning approaches. As a result of this lack of understanding, I have observed that

teachers are readily influenced by any new teaching approach or external testing regime as they work to improve their students' English literacy. With good intentions, teachers implement new approaches and tests without an awareness of the benefits or disadvantages of these for their students' learning. The first step to improve the English literacy of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background may be to explore and develop teachers' understanding of the English experience of their students.

1.2   Study background

Students attending schools in which English is the language of teaching and learning come from a diverse range of language experiences and backgrounds. Students with an English-speaking background are immersed in the English environment; they use English for all their communication and learning in their homes, communities and schools. Other students experience English as an Additional language (EAL), as English is not their vernacular. EAL students are not a homogenous group. By definition, all EAL students have a non-English vernacular, however they differ in their experience of English in their local, regional and national communities. Many EAL students living in cities will experience English in their local and regional communities, while many EAL students who live outside of cities and towns will not.

This study investigates teachers' understanding of the English environment and school learning experience of Indigenous students from a Traditional language background. These students use their Traditional language for communication and learning in their homes and local community. English is the language of school education and the national language, but Indigenous children attending primary schools in Traditional language communities have few opportunities to experience English outside of class. Their limited opportunities to experience English differentiate these Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities from other Indigenous students with different language backgrounds, and from EAL students in general. Up to the time of writing, research has rarely investigated teachers' understanding of the distinct English experience of Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities.

1.3   Research needs

Research on teachers' understanding of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background is very limited, usually generalising Indigenous students as a single group regardless of their language background. (The literature on Indigenous students in general, and on students with a Traditional language background is outlined in the Literature Review, Chapter 3.) As long ago as 1979, the Australian National Aboriginal Community stressed the importance of distinguishing between the different language environments of Indigenous students (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004a). However, twenty-five years after this was highlighted, a review of research of Indigenous education in Australia (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004a) discovered that researchers continue to consider Indigenous students as one group and do not distinguish between the language experiences of Indigenous students. Mellor and Corrigan argue that this generalisation of Indigenous students limits the usefulness of research findings (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004a). In Papua New Guinea, studies of how teachers understand their students' language backgrounds are almost non-existent. The only article on Papua New Guinea found to date makes the point that teachers' understanding of their students is often overlooked in research, even though it is an important aspect of student learning (Crossley, 1985). This lack of research into teachers' understanding of the English experience of students living in Traditional language communities represents a significant gap in knowledge. Teachers should be at the forefront of developing understanding, as they have direct contact with students in Traditional language communities. The present lack of understanding may have a detrimental impact on student learning success.

Studies suggest that schools are failing to improve literacy for Indigenous students. The results from national literacy tests across Australia show that Indigenous students in remote communities have the lowest test results (Wigglesworth, Simpson, & Loakes, 2011); overall, there are significant gaps between the education levels of Indigenous students and those of non-Indigenous students (Herbert, 2012). In the Northern Territory, which has a higher percentage of Indigenous students living in remote areas, those students speaking Traditional languages recorded the lowest literacy results (Ferrari, 2006).

The low literacy levels of Indigenous students contribute to a sense of school failure for these students. Beresford (2003b) argues that studies have shown a link between low literacy levels for Aboriginal students, and criminal behaviour and low self-esteem. Indigenous students with low literacy levels may leave school earlier than non-Indigenous students; this is even more likely for Indigenous students living in remote communities (Schwab, 2012).

In a seminal study in Papua New Guinea, Ahai and Faraclas (1990) identified two main groups of early school-leavers: those students who do not gain a place in further education and have no useful skills for community life; and a smaller group of students who resort to crime to gain the material goods they expected schooling to provide. Students living in remote Papua New Guinean villages are less likely to attend school than those living closer to towns, and those who do attend possibly receive lower quality education than the students attending school in a town (Rena, 2011). While the sources of these problems are complex, schooling based on English literacy must take some responsibility due to the significant impact schooling has on children's lives. To improve the literacy of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background, teachers must begin with a clear and coherent understanding of the English experience of students. Investigating and developing teachers' understanding of these students' English experience, and of the essential requirements for their successful learning, is the aim of this study.

* * *

This thesis is divided into eleven chapters. The next chapter, Student Context, describes the language background and context of Indigenous students in Traditional language communities. Chapter 3, the Literature Review, outlines existing research and articles that are applicable to the research questions; while Chapter 4, Methodology, explains how the research was planned and implemented. The research results are contained in Chapters 5, 6 and 7: Chapters 5 and 6 contain the results of the first and second research questions, respectively, while Chapter 7 collates the results to present the overall results of the study. The discussion is presented in Chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 8 analyses the results of the study to discuss the emergence of certain elements. Chapter 9 discusses how these elements form a framework of teachers' understanding of how distance

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impacts on the English experience and successful learning of Traditional language students. Chapter 10 presents the implications of this study, and Chapter 11 is the Conclusion.

2   Study context

Throughout the world there are communities of Indigenous peoples with Traditional languages that create the language environment. Many of these Indigenous communities are in nations where the national language and the language of education is not their Traditional language. The children of these Indigenous communities attend schools in which they are taught and learn in a language that is not their own. Every aspect of their home and community learning is immersed in the local Traditional language, yet they arrive at school to find a language being used that they rarely encounter in their daily lives. Many schools in Indigenous communities in Africa and the Pacific Islands use English as the language of learning and teaching. Teachers in these schools introduce a language of learning based on a language environment that has a limited presence in their communities. The learning environment they create in their classes can only be based on their understanding of the English language experience of their students.

2.1   Language background

The majority of Indigenous students in Australia are officially categorised as English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) students (Nakata, 2011). The EAL/D category includes all students learning in English who have a non–English-speaking background or who speak a dialect of English different from that used in their school (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2012). Indigenous EAL/D students have one of three language backgrounds: those who speak i) an English dialect, ii) a Creole or iii) a Traditional language. Traditional languages have developed over thousands of years, while the English dialects and Creoles used in Indigenous areas have evolved relatively recently in the last few hundred years. Figure 2.1 illustrates these three language backgrounds of Indigenous EAL/D students in Australia and Indigenous students in Papua New Guinea who may have a Creole or Traditional language experience.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Indigenous English as an │
                    │ Additional Language or   │
                    │ Dialect (EAL/D) students │
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    │ Traditional │  │   Creole   │  │ Indigenous │
    │  Language   │  │            │  │English dialect│
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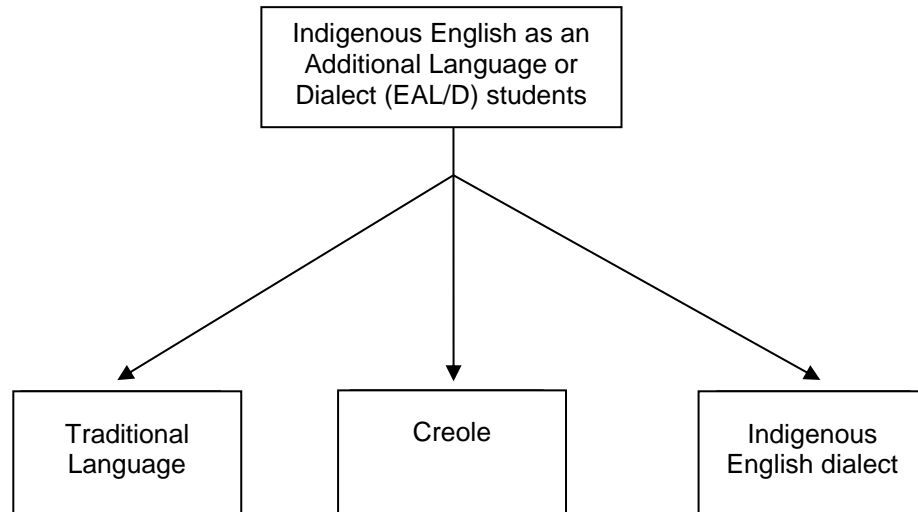
Figure 2.1   The language backgrounds of Indigenous EAL/D students

This study will investigate the English experience of students from Traditional language backgrounds, as distinct from Indigenous students from Creole or English dialect backgrounds. In Australia these Traditional language communities are mainly classified as 'very remote' in terms of distance from towns by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (DoHA, 2001). The community language of different Indigenous communities – Traditional language, Creole or English dialect – has usually been determined by the extent and length of the community's experience of English.

2.1.1 English language experience

Indigenous students' experience of English is the result of the influence of English on their community language. Before their first contact with Europeans, all Indigenous communities were Traditional language communities. When Europeans arrived in some Indigenous communities, the need arose for a language of communication. Pidgins were developed by the Europeans to enable trade, government or missionary activities; they were also used for communication between Indigenous people from different Traditional languages. As interaction developed between the Indigenous community and the Europeans, the Pidgin developed into a more complex English dialect or Creole (Malcolm, 2003). In Indigenous communities where contact with English speakers was extensive, English dialects that could be understood by other English speakers developed as the

community language. In Indigenous communities where contact with English was less extensive, Creoles based on English and Traditional languages developed but these could not be understood by English speakers. Meanwhile, in Indigenous communities with minimal or no contact with Europeans, the Traditional language remained the community language. The level of contact with English, then, has determined whether Indigenous communities use an English dialect, Creole or Traditional language as their community language.

The development of Indigenous community languages can be illustrated in three phases. In Phase One, communities that had European contact began to use Pidgins as a second language for communication with the Europeans. As these Indigenous communities continued to have contact with English speakers and Indigenous people using other Traditional languages, the Pidgins developed into Phase Two – Creoles or English dialects. Over time, Phase Three emerged, as the English dialects and Creoles continued to develop so that they became the community language for some communities. Meanwhile, Indigenous communities that had no contact with Europeans, or more recent contact, retained their Traditional language as their community language and the Traditional language continued to expand. This three-phase development of community languages is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Phase One		Phase Two		Phase Three
Pidgin develops for the specific purpose of trade, government or missionary activity.	⟹	English dialects develop from both the Pidgin and Standard English. Creole develops as a distinct language with both English and Indigenous words and grammatical structure.	⟹	English dialect as a community language Creole as a home language
Traditional languages continue to develop.		⟹		Traditional language as a home language

Figure 2.2   Development of Indigenous community languages

The general development of Pidgins, dialects and Creoles as community languages was explained thirty years ago by Eagleson, Kaldor and Malcolm (1982). More recently, Berry and Hudson (1997) have explained the development of specific community languages for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region of Australia, while Levey (2001) has done so in the Papua New Guinean context. These studies observe that Indigenous communities that had close contact with an English environment developed an English dialect as their community language; Indigenous communities that had less contact with English developed a Creole, itself a distinct language reflecting the influence of Traditional languages and English. Indigenous communities that had little contact with an English environment retained a strong and vibrant Traditional language as their community language.

2.1.2 Indigenous English dialects

Indigenous English dialects are dialects of English that have features of the Traditional language and are used for communication in Indigenous communities (Malcolm, 2003). Although Indigenous English dialects can be understood by other English speakers, there are differences in grammatical structures, sounds and expressions (Eades, 1993). In Australia, the Indigenous English dialect is known as Aboriginal English and contains elements of both English and Traditional languages (Malcolm & Sharifian, 2005). In particular, the phonological features of Aboriginal English show the influence of the original Traditional languages (Drobot, 2011).The different forms of Aboriginal English are somewhere between Standard Australian English (SAE) and a Creole (Butcher, 2008). Aboriginal English can be used as a resource at school for students with an Aboriginal English background as students consider the similarities and differences between Aboriginal English and the English used in the classroom (Sharifian, 2008).

2.1.3 Creoles

Creoles developed from community Pidgins into distinct languages (Malcolm, 2003). Initially they functioned as a second language for Indigenous people, but later replaced the Traditional languages (Levey, 2001; Meakins, 2012) and the Creole became the

community language (Harris & Rampton, 2002). In one case study, the development of Creoles was shown to be the result of Indigenous people working on Australian cattle stations: the language was first a Pidgin and then later developed into a Creole (Meakins, 2012). In Papua New Guinea, the Creole developed from Pidgins used by Indigenous people working on plantations (Levey, 2001). As Creoles developed, they took on all the features of a language, including a specific grammar and vocabulary (Siegel, 2005). In both Australia and Papua New Guinea, Creoles have English as their origin and have Traditional language features. The Creoles replaced the Traditional languages as the vernacular in some communities (Levey, 2001; Meakins, 2012). The Creole in Papua New Guinea is named Tok Pisin (Levey, 2001). Australia has two Creoles: one is used in the Torres Strait (Torres Strait Creole), and the other (Kriol) in the far north of the Australian mainland (Malcolm, 2003).

2.1.4 Traditional Indigenous languages

The Traditional languages of Indigenous people in Australia and Papua New Guinea have an oral tradition. Although some now have dictionaries, their use for written communication is minimal. Traditional languages in Papua New Guinea are known as Tok Ples (literally, the 'the talk of the place') and are the languages of the family and the local community (Pickford, 2003). Traditional languages in Papua New Guinea are indigenous to the areas where they are spoken; each language group makes up less than 7 per cent of the national population (Faraclas, 1997). In Papua New Guinea, Indigenous students with a Traditional language background comprise the largest group of Indigenous students; in Australia, Indigenous students with a Traditional language background are the smallest group of Indigenous students. In Australia, these students live in Traditional language communities with less than 1000 speakers in each community (Butcher, 2008). These communities are located in the remoter areas of northern and central Australia, where English arrived later than it did in other areas of Australia (Walsh, 2005).

Across the world, Indigenous students with a Traditional language background comprise the largest group of Indigenous students learning English, outnumbering the Indigenous students from a Creole or English dialect language background (Muhlhausler, 1996a). These students use their Traditional language in their home and community, and

in their region. Students from a Traditional language background may use an English dialect or Creole when communicating with other Indigenous people who visit their community or when they visit other communities. For many Traditional language students, such as those in Australia and Papua New Guinea, English is the language of education and is the official language or one of the official languages. The language experience of Traditional language students is listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 The language experience of Indigenous students from a Traditional language background

- Their home and community language is a Traditional language.
- Their regional languages include the Traditional language and an English dialect or Creole.
- English is the language of schooling.
- English is the national language.

2.1.5 Australian Traditional language students

The Australian Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities are part of the Australian Indigenous population of about 400 000 people. Of these Indigenous people, 28 per cent live in remote communities (Gray & Beresford, 2008); 12 per cent of the Indigenous population speaks Traditional Aboriginal languages, and 20 of these languages are the main language of a community (Butcher, 2008). Although they are decreasing in number, there remain some Aboriginal communities in which communication is primarily based on Traditional language. These are usually very remote communities. Before the arrival of Europeans in Australia, the many Indigenous groups across the continent each had what were often unique languages and localised ways of educating children that differed from area to area (Campbell, 2007). Important customs, stories and practices were passed on from the old to the young. These students in the Indigenous communities of north-west Australia still acquire their community language and learning in an unstructured, free-ranging learning environment. The students pictured in Figure 2.3 are on a school bush trip where community elders are teaching them how to find bush food.

Figure 2.3   Australian Traditional language students looking for bush food on a school trip

Traditional language students live in small Indigenous communities. Towns are hundreds of kilometres away and reached by unreliable and unsealed roads. The location of the communities away from towns and major roads has meant that visits by non-Indigenous people are infrequent and children in these communities rarely visit the towns in which English is used. Local Indigenous people speaking the local Traditional language typically account for more than 90 per cent of a community's population. The remaining 10 per cent consist of Indigenous people from other language backgrounds and non-Indigenous people who work in the community, such as the teachers in this study. The vast distances between communities are illustrated by Figure 2.4, which shows a Traditional language community with a primary school.

Figure 2.4   A Traditional language community in north-west Australia

The community's distance from town, combined with the arid environment illustrated in Figure 2.5, limits employment opportunities.

Figure 2.5   A vast and arid desert environment near a Traditional language community

Primary industries such as farming are not possible because of the environment, and secondary industries are not feasible because of vast distances to markets. Employment can therefore only be found in the service industries, and opportunities are limited to work in the school, clinic, store or government office. Australian Traditional language students often spend significant periods of time away from their home community during the school year as they may move around with their families to other Indigenous communities for funerals, sporting events and cultural events. Children are part of extended families in which parenting roles are shared between parents, aunties, uncles and grandparents. Indigenous children see uncles and aunties as their mothers and fathers, and their cousins as their brothers and sisters. Young children stay close to their

families, learning about community life from family members as they experience their daily lives. Children learn community and cultural activities as they move around the local community and environment, and participate in an activity as they learn about it. In Figure 2.6, students are learning about cultural dances by participating in a dance.

Figure 2.6   Traditional language children learning traditional dances

Learning in the community takes place orally in the Traditional language. Although in recent years some Traditional languages have been written down, children rarely see it written and do not write in their own language. All cultural stories and learning are transmitted orally. These children will rarely encounter English in their daily lives outside school time. In Traditional language communities in north-west Australia, children who attend primary schools mainly use English only at school, where it is used alongside the Traditional language in the classroom. Australian Traditional language children begin school in Kindergarten at age 4, and then continue in primary school for eight years. At school they learn as individuals and in groups, where teachers aim to create language-rich environments. Figure 2.7 shows students learning together in class.

Figure 2.7   Students in a Traditional language community learning in class

Learning in groups outside the classroom is enjoyed by students who prefer an open air environment. Teaching is supported by teacher assistants from the local community. Teacher assistants not only can speak the local Traditional language, but also understand and have experienced community learning themselves when they were children. Teacher assistants provide a strong local contact at school where the children are learning in English. Figure 2.8 shows students in a Traditional language community being taught by a teacher assistant.

Figure 2.8   A teacher assistant teaching students outside of their classroom

2.1.6   Papua New Guinean Traditional language students

In Papua New Guinea, the majority of students live in Traditional language communities and attend schools where they are taught in English. Traditional languages are used

extensively throughout Papua New Guinea (Heath & Grant, 2000) and are the community language in most village communities (Pickford, 2003). The population of Papua New Guinea is almost six million Indigenous people, including one million school-aged children, with a total of around 800 Traditional languages spoken (Campbell, 2007). About 67 per cent of primary school students attend school. Some students are unable to attend school due to an inability to afford school fees, the lack of schools or the need to help their families grow food (Rena, 2011). Eighty-five percent of the population are subsistence farmers (Hopkins et al., 2005) who receive minimal financial assistance from the government.

The Papua New Guinean participants in this study live and work in the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea. The people of the Highlands are Melanesian. Their houses are spread out over the hilly landscapes rather than grouped together in villages, as shown in Figure 2.9. Most children live with their families in houses built in the traditional style using materials found locally (Figure 2.10). The land in the Highlands is very fertile and many crops are grown. Most community members are subsistence farmers who grow food for their families' consumption (Hopkins et al., 2005). Children play or help their family work in their gardens. The region is densely populated, so all land is in great demand for cultivation – including the land close to houses (Figure 2.11). The language and culture of students from the Highlands remains very strong and forms a significant part of the life experiences of children and their families. Within each language group there are vibrant cultural events, practices and responsibilities. School students participating in a traditional cultural event are depicted in Figure 2.12.

Figure 2.9   Highland houses in Traditional language communities located near gardens

Figure 2.10   Traditional language children near their house in the Highlands

Figure 2.11   Extensive family gardens in the Highlands

Figure 2.12   Traditional language students at their primary school graduation

In the 1930s, when the first European contact was made with the Highland people, there were approximately one million people living in the Highlands region (Cleverley, 2007). Previously Europeans had thought there were few people in the Highlands, and the Highlands people were not aware that there were other people outside of the Highlands. Formal education was first brought by missionaries in the late 1930s and the majority of schools were operated by Christian missions developing their own teaching programs. Over the years that followed the number of government schools increased but the mission schools continued to have a significant presence in education (Cleverley, 2007). An education reform of primary education began in the early 2000s and has resulted in a National Curriculum of outcomes-based education for primary schools (Aihi, 2011).

Families in Traditional language communities in the Papua New Guinean Highlands value education in English in primary school as English is perceived to be the key to secondary and further education and, ultimately, employment. When students find employment after education they are often the only person in their families with formal employment and they are expected to support the extended family. Families are willing to make significant sacrifices for their children's primary education in anticipation of future economic benefits. These sacrifices are necessary: all primary schools in Papua New Guinea charge school fees to supplement government funding, and students who are unable to pay the school fees are sometimes excluded from school. In Traditional language communities, most families earn money by selling their surplus crops in local markets. Almost all of the cash they earn is used to pay their children's school fees.

Children begin their schooling with three years of pre-primary education in elementary schools. They begin primary school in Grade 3, and attend the primary school for six years, until Grade 8. (A primary school in the Highlands is shown in Figure 2.13.) When students reach Grade 8, national examinations determine which students will be accepted into secondary education. Limited positions in tertiary education mean that only a few students who begin secondary education will have the opportunity for post-school education in Papua New Guinea. Post-school education does not necessarily guarantee paid employment, as employment opportunities are limited. Although it is the hope of future employment that drives families to send their children to primary school to be educated in English, the dream of employment is realised by only a few people.

Figure 2.13   A primary school in a Traditional language community in the Papua New Guinea Highlands

Teaching and learning in the elementary schools has been in the vernacular of the local community (Honan, 2002). For many students the local vernacular is a Traditional language. These elementary schools are located close to where children live. At the beginning of 2013, English replaced Traditional languages as the language of learning for elementary students (Waima, 2013). Before the changes the 2013 English policy will bring, students began a transition to English in the third year of elementary education, the year before they start primary school. Although elementary students learned to read and write in their Traditional language, their Traditional language is not used in written texts outside of the classroom. In Figure 2.14, elementary students are learning letter formation.

Figure 2.14   Elementary students forming letters in their classroom

Prior to 2013, primary schools were meant to make a slow transition from the Traditional language to English so that, by the time students reach upper primary level, almost all teaching and learning is in English. However, in reality the transition to English in school occurred more quickly: many teachers cannot speak the local language, and families demand that their children be taught in English, as they see English as necessary for their children's further education and employment.

Despite this enthusiasm for English, students do not see or hear examples of it in their daily lives. The school day for many children in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea

begins early, as they may need to walk long distances to get to school due to the scattered location of houses throughout the gardens. As the children walk along tracks to school they see and hear no examples of English. When they arrive at school, they are unlikely to hear English as they play with their friends and communicate in their Traditional languages. When they walk into their class at the beginning of the school day, they will hear and see English for the first time that day.

In the lower primary years children are often seated in groups but work is individual as they copy or do exercises that are written on the chalkboards. Chalkboards and charts are the main source of written texts as the supply of books is very limited, and students share class texts often with five or more other students. Figure 2.15 shows children involved in a typical daily activity: copying notes from the board and doing exercises. In the upper primary classes in the Highland schools, students are more likely to be seated as individuals rather than as groups. Figure 2.16 shows a more typical formation of upper primary students seated facing the chalkboard, while the teacher supervises.

Figure 2.15   Primary school in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea

Figure 2.16   Upper primary students working from the chalkboard

2.2   Teachers in Traditional language communities

The Traditional language communities of north-west Australia and the Highlands of Papua New Guinea provide two contexts for the study of teachers' understanding of the English language and school learning experience of Traditional language students. Teachers were selected for the study from these areas because the researcher had taught in both areas and was able to invite teachers to participate in the study. Although the teachers in this study live and work in two different cultures and countries, the historical inaccessibility of both areas to Europeans resulted in community contact with English speakers relatively recently – that is, in the 1930s. Consequently the communities in which these teachers work have had similar experiences of English.

Teachers in both areas work in communities where the community languages are Traditional languages. The schooling systems in north-west Australia and the Highlands of Papua New Guinea were originally based on mainstream Australian schooling. Both areas use English as the language of education and as an official language. There are similarities between the appropriate classroom learning and the local learning context of Australian Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean students (Nagai, 2004; Nagai & Lister, 2004). Whether the school is located in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea or in north-west Australia,

there is no doubt the focus of school learning is English, as the sign in Figure 2.17 indicates.

Figure 2.17   Sign in a Highland School encouraging students to use English

Almost all teachers in Traditional language communities of north-west Australia are non-Indigenous themselves. When they arrive to teach in these schools it is often their first experience of Indigenous people and students. They bring with them teaching and education experiences from towns and cities where the vast majority of students live in English-speaking environments. Some teachers may have had experience teaching students who do not speak English as their first language. In the Indigenous communities where they teach, teachers themselves are the main members of the small group of people from an English-speaking background.

The Australian teachers who participated in this study live and work in two Traditional language communities in the desert region of north-west Australia. These Australian Indigenous communities of between 200 and 500 people are each approximately 300 kilometres from the nearest small town. The smaller school has four teachers with about 40 students, and the larger school has nine teachers with approximately 90 students. The schools are composite schools, which are primary schools with an attached secondary class. The majority of students are primary-aged; there are only a few secondary students, as most go away to boarding school in towns and some decide to leave school after Year 7. Children begin school at age 4 in Kindergarten and

then have eight years of primary education. Classes have two or three grades combined to form classes due to the small number of students.

Teachers in the Papua New Guinean Highland communities are indigenous to Papua New Guinea but are often not indigenous to the local community in which they teach and live. Most teachers do not speak the local language of their students nor have experienced the local culture. To get to their schools at the beginning of the school year, many teachers have to travel long distances, mostly by road; some have to walk for more than a day to get to their school. Upon arriving in the communities in which they will teach, they find a language they do not speak and a culture that is distinctively different from their own, even though it is also Melanesian. In some places, teachers and students will share a Creole called Tok Pisin as a means of communication. However, it is not unusual for teachers in Traditional language communities, especially those teaching younger students, to discover that they do not share a common language with their students. When they are explaining concepts in English, these teachers cannot make a further explanation in a local Traditional language they do not know. Some teachers will ask students who do understand the concept to explain it to their peers in the Traditional language, and the teacher will then check student understanding in English. However, using student translators is often not possible at lower primary level.

Teachers and other educators involved in this study formed their understanding of the English experience of students in Traditional language communities as they taught their students. Their students use a Traditional language as their community language, which distinguishes them from other Indigenous students who have an English dialect or Creole language background. Students' experience of learning and language in Traditional language communities influences the way they learn in school. Teachers and other educators who have taught students in Traditional language communities are in a unique position to develop our understanding of the English experience and successful learning of these students.

The review of the literature in the next chapter investigates research and articles that inform the existing understanding of the English and school learning experience of students with a Traditional language background.

3   Literature review

The literature review was researched by using a number of different data-bases and visiting a range of university libraries. In Australia, the Australian Catholic University library in Sydney was the prime source; in addition, research was conducted at the Macquarie University and Australian National University libraries. **Very few Papua New Guinean journals applicable to this study were available online so research was conducted at university libraries.** In Papua New Guinea, the libraries of all four universities were visited by the researcher: the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea University of Technology and Divine Word University. The National Research Institute of Papua New Guinea library and the library of Holy Trinity Teachers College were also visited.

While there is extensive research on Indigenous students and EAL/D students in general, research specifically on Indigenous students with a Traditional language background is limited. In this case, an understanding of EAL/D and Indigenous student literacy provides a starting point for understanding. In Australia, at present, most of the research on Indigenous students considers Indigenous students as a single group and does not distinguish between the three types of language experience outlined in Chapter 2.

The literature's contribution to understanding the English experience of students living in remote Traditional language communities is presented in the first three sections of this chapter. Section 3.1 relates to the understanding of the opportunities for Indigenous students to experience English in their daily lives. Section 3.2 examines the literature on the benefits Indigenous students may achieve using English. The contrasts between the class learning context and the community learning context for Indigenous students are presented in Section 3.3.

Sections 3.4 and 3.5 then present the essential elements for the successful school learning of students in Traditional language communities. Teacher understanding, as presented in the literature, is one of the significant factors that determine Indigenous student success in learning in English at school and is presented in Section 3.4, while

Section 3.5 outlines what the research says about the teacher-led strategies and approaches that may support successful learning of Indigenous students. Finally, Section 3.6 explains the theoretical bases for teaching non-English speaking students that may guide understanding of the English environment experience and successful learning for students living in Traditional language communities.

3.1   English experiences of Indigenous students

The level of English experience of Indigenous students is of interest to this study for two reasons: first, because it is significant to teachers' understanding of their students; second, because of its impact on the school success of students in Traditional language communities. To this researcher's knowledge the literature in this area is limited, with only a few researchers commenting on the English experience of Indigenous students.

3.1.1   Community English experiences

The lack of opportunities to use English in daily life is a common experience in remote Indigenous communities (Kral, 2009). Studies in Australia (Butcher, 2008) and Papua New Guinea (Pickford, 2003) highlight the dominance of the Traditional language in a few Indigenous communities, as has been noted in Chapter 2. While the dominance of the Traditional language implies a lack of opportunities to experience English, the incidence of English is not stated in these studies. Other studies have investigated the English experiences of Indigenous students in a few desert communities in South Australia (Muhlhausler, 1996a). In the report on his study, Muhlhausler (1996b) found that secondary students with a Traditional language background had limited English experiences in their family, community and media interactions. Descriptions of these experiences of English by Muhlhausler are listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1   Community English experiences of secondary students with a
Traditional language background

▪ There is minimal speaking of English in the family.
▪ Aboriginal English may be used when playing with children who do not speak the Traditional

> - language.
> - Interactions with shop and medical staff consist of single words or single sentences.
> - Students hear English spoken on television but as it is not related to the child's context, it is not useful for learning English.
> - Limited printed material is available in English; children usually look at the illustrations.
> - Comics are read and discussed by children.

Source: Compiled from Muhlhausler (1996b)

Muhlhausler (1996b) also notes that children in these desert communities in South Australia do not interact with books that have a focus on individual reading as enjoyment. Further, they are more used to interacting with others in literacy activities than working individually. In Papua New Guinean villages it seems there is little or no access to any written material at all (McKeown, 2003). While the research is limited, it points to a lack of opportunities for students living in Traditional language communities to experience English in their daily lives. This study revealed teachers' present understanding of their students' opportunities to experience English in their daily lives (Section 8.2.1).

3.1.2 School English experiences

Although no recent studies were found that specifically investigated the extent to which English was experienced at school for Traditional language students, a study of some Australian Aboriginal communities reported that conversations between students in class were often in the Traditional language rather than English (Burton, 1996). An Australian study of secondary students living in an Aboriginal Traditional language community showed the students preferred to use their Traditional language because it was 'safer' and there was a lower risk of them making mistakes (Barnett, 1996a). A Papua New Guinean study compared the English interaction of students living in a village with that of students living in an urban situation. It found there was less English in the village school students' homes than in the urban homes and that this did have an impact on reading literacy at school (Hopkins et al., 2005).

A study of remote Australian Indigenous communities by Kral (2009) highlights several important issues to consider when studying the school experience of Indigenous

students in communities. For Indigenous students, English is often not their first language. In some Indigenous communities, English has only been introduced quite recently and only two or three generations have participated in English-medium schooling. Because written literacy has been present in Indigenous communities for a relatively short period of time, reading and writing is not part of the daily lives of these communities (Kral, 2009). Overall, the literature suggests that, in Traditional language communities, not only are English experiences minimal in the community lives of students, but English experiences are also limited at school. The limited information in the current literature indicates a need for further research to inform teachers' understanding of the extent students in Traditional language communities experience English in their daily lives at school and in the community. What benefits, then, does the literature suggest might be gained from these students' experience of English?

3.2   Benefits of students' English experience

Research has shown that the value students place on what they learn is influenced by their ethnic background and culture (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Therefore, as Munns, Martin and Craven (2008) argue, it is especially important for Indigenous students to be helped to see the importance and relevance of the English they gain through school learning. Further, using English in class in ways that they experience it being used in their daily lives (Honan, 2002) enhances their lives in their communities (Kral, 2009); however, this may not be obvious to students whose culture and community experience is different from their school culture and experience.

This section highlights the literature that focuses on the benefits that Indigenous students may gain as a result of using English. The benefits that Indigenous students achieve from learning in English are part of their English experience. These benefits will depend on their perception of the value or usefulness of literacy skills in their community lives.

An Indigenous perspective on the community benefits of introduced languages such as English has its origins in Paulo Freire's work with village groups in South America (Freire, 1970). As Anderson and Irvine (1993) explain, Freire's approach is motivated by

literacy that results in social transformation. Heath and Grant (2000) describe this approach in practical terms as a reversal from the mainstream approach that promotes English as being for an individual's benefit, giving the individual the means of engaging in the wider community. Instead, the Indigenous perspective sees English as the means to empower individuals to use their literacy to benefit their community and enrich community life (Heath & Grant, 2000). These contrasts suggested by the literature regarding the benefits that may be achieved by Indigenous students using English are outlined in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2   Indigenous and mainstream school perspectives on the benefits of English

Indigenous perspective	Mainstream school perspective
Literacy provides skills for the local community.	Literacy provides capabilities within the wider community.
Literacy is for community benefit.	Literacy is for individual benefit.
Literacy leads to life within the community.	Literacy leads to opportunities away from the community.

Source: Compiled from information in Heath and Grant (2000) on literacy in Papua New Guinea

The issue of how Indigenous students may benefit from using English is the fundamental question for learning in English. Is its purpose to prepare Indigenous students for formal employment, or to educate them to be useful members of their local communities (as argued by Solon and Solon, 2006)? Some research has noted the dangers of linking the purpose of literacy to gaining employment. In their survey of literacy research, Lonsdale and McCurry (2004) show there is no direct link between an improvement in literacy and employment. Both Lonsdale and McCurry in the Australian context, and Solon and Solon in Papua New Guinea recommend against the narrowing of school literacy by perceiving English literacy as a passport to future employment. As only a small percentage of Papua New Guinean students gain formal employment, Hopkins et al. (2005) state that education should prepare students for life rather than employment.

A study of ten schools in Papua New Guinea noted that education was seen to be the key to wealth but in reality it did not lead to employment due to job shortages (Maxwell & Yoko, 2004). A case study of some primary schools in Papua New Guinea reported that students valued their education for much more than its potential to increase employment opportunities (Freeman & Bochner, 2008). In the areas of Australia in which Traditional language communities are located, there are even fewer opportunities for employment than in the Papua New Guinean context. The research suggests that future employment cannot be a motivating factor for students from Traditional language backgrounds to learn in English at school (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004a). Therefore, it seems that determining the benefits that Traditional language students actually may experience from learning in English is a significant factor in students' experience of English.

The ways in which Indigenous people value English are not always obvious and straightforward. A study of the use of English in a Papua New Guinean village (McKeown, 2006) showed that English was valued as a way of gaining prestige in the eyes of the other community members, as it was important to be known as a person who could write. In this study, McKeown found that the purpose of writing public notes and putting them up at the store was not for communication, as the other people in the village could not read; it was to highlight to others that the note writer could write, thus gaining prestige.

Students in Traditional language communities may be disadvantaged in achieving the benefits of English due to limited English ability. Research in a number of countries has reported that Indigenous students suffer from educational disadvantage when compared to non-Indigenous students (Freeman & Bochner, 2008). Evidence shows that the educational levels of Australian Indigenous students are lower than Indigenous students in other countries (Gray & Beresford, 2008). In Papua New Guinea the adult literacy level is only 50 per cent. This suggests that the literacy levels of Indigenous students may also be low; therefore, they would find it difficult to use English for their benefit. Research specifically into how students in Traditional language communities benefit from using English in the present and how they may benefit in the future would enhance understanding of these students' experience of English. Teachers in this study

shared their understanding of the extent to which their students may benefit from using English in the present and the future (Section 8.3.1).

3.3   Learning contexts

Differences between community and school experiences have been noted in Section 3.1 above. The contrast between the class learning context and the community learning context for students in Traditional language communities is another area that emerged in the literature review. These two contexts differ in both their processes of learning and the topics of learning. The differentiation of the school and community learning contexts began with the introduction of the English-based western schooling system, which was substantially different from the traditional learning of the community. As well, the structure of English – the language to be learned at school – is very different from the structures of Traditional languages, with each having its own complexities. The following sections will examine the contrasts between the school and community learning contexts.

3.3.1   Community learning context

Long before the arrival of the western schooling system, a system of learning had developed in Indigenous communities. Studies of traditional learning show that community learning successfully transmitted knowledge from adults to children (Campbell, 2007; Cleverley, 2007; McLaughlin, 1994). In Papua New Guinea, traditional learning was all based within the extended family and connected to life in the village (Maxwell & Yoko, 2004). In Australia, an in-depth study of teaching Australian Indigenous children about hunting exemplifies the main aspects of community learning (Rennie, 2006). Table 3.3 presents the main features from Rennie's (2006) research regarding how Indigenous children learn within the community.

Table 3.3   Features of Indigenous community learning

▪ Children learn about community activities during the activity.
▪ Children participate in the actual community activity as they learn.
▪ Children learn by listening to stories being told in the community context.
▪ Children demonstrate and refine their knowledge by storytelling in the community.

Source: Compiled from Rennie (2006)

This research indicates that, as knowledge and skills are gained, learning is immediately applied in the activity and most of the learning takes place during the actual activity, that is, in the context in which the learning will be used (Rennie, 2006). Indigenous children in communities predominantly learn by observation and imitation but, when necessary, they ask questions and adults give explanations. Children also learn by listening to adults tell stories about activities. Later, children tell the stories themselves, and include an explanation of the procedures involved. In summary, children in the community learn by interacting with adults (Rennie, 2006) with the aim to identify and develop the skills required by young people in their community (Price, 2012).

The research on language structures also aids our understanding of Traditional language students' experience of English in the community learning context. Muhlhausler's (1996a) research shows there are extensive differences between Aboriginal languages and English in terms of their language structure and sounds. These differences can be seen by comparing Kukatja, an Aboriginal language, with English. In Table 3.4, the Kukatja words perform the same function as the words in English below them.

Table 3.4   Differences in grammatical structure between Kukatja and English

'The man is talking to both of us.'
Puntululinya   **wangkinpa**   [*pa* is put at the end of all words that end in consonants]
Man to both of us   talking is
The same statement can also be made in the following way:
Wangkinpalinya   **puntulu**
Talking is both of us   man to

Not only is the word order in English different to that in Kukatja, but different sentence structures in Kukatja can be used to translate the same English sentence. In this example, the verb is in the middle the English sentence, whereas in Kukatja the verb is either at the beginning or the end of the sentence. This is an example of how Traditional language speakers need to learn a very different language pattern when learning English. Clayton (1999) supports this, stating that learning a second language will be difficult when it is significantly different from the home language.

3.3.2   School learning context

Traditional language students' experience of school today is influenced by how school education was introduced to their communities. According to Campbell (2007), the process that resulted in the education of Indigenous children in Australia and Papua New Guinea in English began with the introduction of English to Indigenous communities. Europeans who established schools for the Indigenous people did so in a context where there had never been schools, where there were no resources and where, usually, the teachers could not speak the local language (Watts, 1996). The introduction of European languages in countries colonised by Europeans resulted in the European language becoming the language of formal education. Literacy in the introduced European language became a requirement for participation in the economic and civic life of the national community (Collins & Blot, 2003). As a result the introduced language dominated the Traditional language in the wider community as a means of communication, especially for economic activity (Kramsch, 2000). The introduction of English as the language of education in some colonised countries not only introduced a new language to communities but also introduced literacy methods that were deemed to be the appropriate strategies for English literacy learning (Lemke, 1995).

The introduction of English to Indigenous communities has been studied in both Australia and Papua New Guinea. Nakata (2001) studied the introduction of English to the Indigenous people of the Torres Strait, Australia. Missionaries brought both English and certain cultural values about the way people should live. Hence the Torres Strait Islanders' language and lifestyle changed together. The new introduced lifestyle required manufactured products. To gain access to these products, people sought formal

employment. Schooling in English soon became the prerequisite of employment. The arrival of the government to the islands led to the establishment of laws, regulations and schooling, all of which were in English. Nakata (2001) reports that the Torres Strait Islanders enthusiastically participated in schooling in English as it was seen to be the key to material wealth. Thus through the actions of the missionaries, the government and the people themselves, English and its attached cultural values became accepted.

In the case of an Indigenous village in Papua New Guinea, Kulick and Stroud (1993) analysed the impact of the establishment of an English-medium school. The people perceived a close link between the English language of the Europeans and the material wealth the Europeans enjoyed. English, they concluded, was the key to material wealth. Kulick and Stroud observed the prestige enjoyed by local people fluent in the new language. Prestige and wealth were accepted by the Indigenous people as cultural values that came with the acquisition of English literacy.

Western schooling introduced English into Indigenous communities. Despite no English being spoken outside of the school context, Indigenous people accepted English for two main reasons: first, it was perceived that English literacy skills gave access to economic opportunities; second, these skills gave people in the local community a certain prestige. While Traditional language enabled participation in the local community, English was seen as the key to participation in the wider community, especially through employment in towns (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004b).

Further understanding the contrast between the school learning context and the community learning context requires an investigation of the differences in learning areas, learning activities and communication styles in both contexts.

3.3.3 Learning areas

The literature indicates that the class learning context is often very different from Indigenous students' community learning contexts in terms of what is learned and the knowledge gained. For Indigenous students in Papua New Guinea (Hopkins et al., 2005) and Australia (Malcolm, Kessaris, & Hunter, 2003), there is little evidence that classroom connections are made to the community context of Indigenous students. A report on

some Papua New Guinean schools reveals that the school curriculum is not connected to the local context (Maxwell & Yoko, 2004), and that learning area topics are usually well outside the experience of Indigenous students. A review of literacy policy in Australian schools between 1999 and 2009 does not identify any significant policy and program differentiation for Indigenous students with English dialect, Creole or Traditional language backgrounds (Cross, 2009).

Universal testing and the resulting impetus towards universal programs (Luke, 2001) leads to a class learning environment that will not and cannot value local literacies (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004). This lack of connection between class and community learning caused by universal testing and a universal approach to teaching and learning has been reported in the Australian Indigenous context (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004; Munns, Lawson, & Long, 1998; Walton, 1996) and in the Papua New Guinean context (Waters, 1998). Overall, the research indicates the learning areas of the classroom are not related to the local context and experience of Indigenous students. Differences are also seen in the learning processes that occur at school and those that occur in the community. More recent research is required to determine the contrast between the learning areas studied in class and the learning areas of community learning for Indigenous students in Traditional language communities. This study explained teachers' understanding of the contrast between community and school learning areas and the affect this had on student learning (Section 8.4.1)

3.3.4 Learning activities

Researchers have examined the relationship between the ways in which Indigenous communities learn and what happens in classrooms. Teachers of Traditional language students need an understanding of Indigenous community learning processes so that they may determine the extent of the contrast to their class learning processes. In their community learning, Indigenous children learn by working together as a group rather than as individuals (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002). Learning is self-directed and active, where the children choose and implement their own learning activities (Sims, O'Connor, & Forrest, 2003). In the community, Indigenous children's interaction is based on the

values of cooperation and coexistence (Hewitt, 2000). Children learn by observation and imitation as adults model and demonstrate. Studies by Sims and colleagues (2003) of Aboriginal students in Western Australia and Faraclas (1997) on Papua New Guinean students identified some features of Indigenous student learning activities in their communities. Even though these studies took place some years ago, they offer useful insights, as listed in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5   Features of Indigenous students' community learning interactions

- Children usually initiate their own learning activities.
- Learning is based in social interaction.
- Learning is active and takes place in groups.
- Adults teach children by demonstration and modelling.
- Students learn by observation and imitation.
- Children learn by participating in the learning context.

Source: Compiled from Sims et al. (2003) and Faraclas (1997)

The learning activity in Indigenous classrooms has been shown to be very different from students' community activities. In classrooms the teacher is the expert who directs and controls learning activities, which are often individual activities. Pressure to cover the curriculum can cause teachers to exercise strong control, direction and supervision over the classroom learning process (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2004). With Aboriginal students, teachers have been reported to allow only those behaviours which are seen to be directly related to literacy achievement in the classroom (Partington & Gray, 2003). Two studies provide specific examples of the school learning interaction. A study of a village primary school in Papua New Guinea observed learning interaction to be basically teacher instruction, with students responding together in chorus (Hopkins et al., 2005). Here, teachers did not give their students a more active role in their learning. Another study of a group of junior secondary Indigenous science students in Vanuatu, who were learning in English, found that most learning interaction was by direct teacher instruction. This method of learning resulted in the students becoming passive learners (Cook & Wallace, 1996). Minimal class work was done in groups because it was reported that their teachers perceived students did not have enough knowledge to achieve understanding by group interaction. Their teachers' views – that students were unable to

interact usefully – resulted in them not giving students the opportunity to interact actively in group learning. Instead of group learning, Cook and Wallace reported that teachers gave capable students the passive role of reading aloud from texts. For writing activities, teachers instructed their students to copy notes from the board, because the teachers believed that their students were incapable of writing their own notes. This research implies that teachers need to develop some confidence in Indigenous students' abilities in order to provide opportunities for their students to move from passive compliance to active learning. This may encourage students to learn for the value of learning (Munns et al., 2008).

These school learning activities contrast with the Indigenous students' community learning experience of student-controlled and student-directed learning, with adults as models and demonstrators (Comber & Hill, 2000). The community learning interactions of Indigenous students are active and grounded in context, suggesting that these students will learn best at school where learning is active and related to their life context (Walton, 1996), and where they work actively together in groups creating knowledge, rather than as passive students (Beresford, 2003c). A school literacy approach where students are actively constructing literacy as they learn (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004) would complement the Indigenous students' community learning interactions. However, the literature points to the fact that this is not the case, as Table 3.6 shows.

Table 3.6   The contrast between community and school learning activities

Learning interaction feature	Community learning	School learning
Task focus	Group activities	Individual activities
Learning control	Student/group control	Teacher control
Learning area selection	Student/group-directed	Teacher-directed
Learning support	Group as equals	Teacher as expert
Adult role	Models and demonstrates	Authority and expert

Source: Developed from Comber and Hill (2000)

As Table 3.6 indicates, school learning activities may be focused on individual learning, with the teacher at the centre of the learning activity, whereas community learning for Indigenous students is focused on the group, with the student at the centre

of the learning. Overall, this research was conducted over a decade ago and could be explored further to establish whether any changes in teachers' understanding have occurred, and to determine the extent to which community learning activities are evident in class learning. Teachers' understanding of the difference between school and community learning activities was described in this study (Section 8.4.1).

3.3.5   Communication systems

The communication systems used in school learning contexts may also contrast with those used in the Indigenous community. Malcolm et al. (2003) compared Australian Aboriginal communication with communication in classrooms. They found that Indigenous students experience community communication: speaking rights are shared, topics change, people can alternate between being spectators and direct participants, spontaneous feedback is given, and people are not required to answer direct questions. In contrast, classroom communication is on a single topic and controlled by the teacher, students are expected to always be engaged, feedback is given only at the end of the communication, and students are expected to answer questions. These differences in communication systems, as highlighted in Malcolm et al. (2003), are presented in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7   Differences between communication systems

Communication feature	Indigenous communication	School communication
Language culture	Local Indigenous	Anglo-Celtic middle class
Communication control	Shared	Teacher-controlled
Topics	Wide-ranging	Single-topic focus
Speaker rights	All participants	Teacher-designated
Listener participation	Engage and disengage	Always engaged
Answering questions	Answers cannot be demanded	Answers are expected
Feedback during conversation	Spontaneous and continuous	Given at the end
Direct, challenging statements	Unacceptable	Acceptable

A comparison of the two systems, according to Malcolm et al. (2003), reveals a school communication system that is fixed and controlled by the teacher, which contrasts to the more fluid and free Indigenous system of communication (Malcolm et al., 2003). Indigenous students' experience of reading and writing in school is also different. For example, when reading does occur in the community, it is more often a group activity, with children looking at a book together or seeing someone writing a public notice. Here, reading is a group activity, but in class reading, the reading may be just for individuals (Burton, 1996). Understanding of Traditional students' experience of communication in their communities is important if teachers are to identify its contrast with communication at school. Research into how teachers understand these differing communication styles and how they affect the learning of Traditional language students is important, as it is another facet of teachers' understanding of the contrast between school and community learning contexts.

The literature indicates that the investigation of the contrasts between school and community learning contexts requires an understanding of the learning areas, learning activities and communication processes of community learning. There is an implication that teachers in Traditional language communities need to understand these contrasts to design successful learning experiences for their students. Further research could determine how well teachers in Traditional language communities in current times do understand the differences in these contexts.

The literature search revealed another area that is important in teachers' understanding of Indigenous students in general: the requirements for students to successfully learn English. This research is presented in Sections 3.4 and 3.5.

3.4   Successful students

The importance of teacher understanding of Indigenous students and the factors that influence successful learning surfaced as key areas in the literature search. The impact of this understanding on the successful learning of all students, and particularly of Indigenous students, was foregrounded in the research.

3.4.1 Teacher expectations and success

Historically, teachers' understanding of their students has always been seen as crucial to successful learning. In 1969, Rosenthal and Jacobson published the study *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. Its results, as reported in Cotton (1989), showed that teacher expectations of student learning significantly impacted on student intelligence. In the study, a group of students was randomly chosen and teachers were falsely told that these students' test results indicated that they were about to experience a great increase in intellectual ability. Consequently, teachers had high expectations of these students. At the end of the study, these target students showed higher IQ results than their peers who started with similar ability. This impact of teacher expectation on student IQ was termed the Pygmalion Effect.

The significant impact of teacher expectations on student IQ results has not been replicated in similar studies since. Both Cotton (1989) and Spitz (1999) reviewed research since Rosenthal and Jacobson's study and found that no study had conclusively shown teacher expectations leading to an improvement in student IQ. This has raised serious doubts concerning the validity of the Pygmalion Effect. Despite this, Rosenthal and Jacobson made a significant contribution to the study of the impact of teacher expectations on student performance by igniting interest and awareness of the possible link between teachers' expectations of their students and successful learning.

In her extensive review of this type of research, Cotton (1989) found that teacher expectations definitely affected student achievement. Similarly, Spitz (1999) found that although researchers have not been able to replicate the IQ improvements of Rosenthal and Jacobson, they did find that teacher expectations do impact on many other areas of student performance. Some of Spitz's results are significant for primary schools with Traditional language students. He found that younger students are more influenced by teacher expectations and that teachers are generally unaware of how their understanding of their students can harm student achievement. Teachers' expectations of ethnic minority students have been shown to be lower and this impacts on student achievement (Rubie-Davies et al, 2012). Lower expectations of students' academic performance were also reported in a study of teachers' views of children from immigrant families (Sirin,

Ryce, Mir, 2009). Teachers' evaluation of their students' ethnic or cultural background seems to affect their assessment of student potential and learning success adversely.

The process of how teachers' expectations of student ability impact on student learning is straightforward. It seems that once teachers form an understanding of student ability, they make the reality of student performance fit their understanding (Miller, 2001). When a teacher has decided that a student has high ability, an incidence of poor performance will be dismissed as bad luck. In contrast, when the teacher decides that a student has limited ability, a poor performance will confirm the teacher's understanding of the student having limited ability. Like all of us often do, teachers will shape reality to fit their understanding. Miller also reported research that showed that highly effective teachers always have high expectations of both themselves and their students, which results in learning gains. These teachers greatly encourage their students, and the learning performances of their students improve. These findings are supported by a study of ten New Zealand primary schools by Mitchell, Cameron and Wylie (2002) who discovered that when teachers perceived that their students were able to improve in their learning, student learning did improve. Identifying teachers' expectations of their students in Traditional language communities would improve their understanding of how student success may be achieved.

3.4.2 Teachers' understanding of success factors

Teachers' understanding of their students is determined by a variety of factors. In a review of the relevant research, Rubie-Davies, Hattie and Hamilton (2003) identified students' age, gender, ethnicity, social class, social skills and, significantly for this study, student language background as factors influencing teachers' understanding of their students. August and Hakuta (1998), in their analysis of research on teacher understanding of EAL students, revealed that teachers expected students from a non-English speaking background to be less capable because of the language practices they used with their first language.

The literature suggests that teachers identify the source of Indigenous students' literacy problems as being in the child's home and local community, not in classroom literacy practices. Research on teachers' understanding of their Aboriginal students

revealed that teachers thought that community life had an adverse impact on student learning (Beresford, 2003a; Munns & Mootz, 2001). Similarly, teachers' understanding of their Indigenous students was detected to have a negative impact on student learning in New Zealand Maori students (Bishop et al., 2004; Rubie-Davies et al., 2003). Beresford (2003a) found that teachers perceived low literacy was the result of poor child rearing in Australian Indigenous homes, and that teachers believed that Indigenous children came to school with few, if any, appropriate skills. Teachers were found to identify Indigenous children's living conditions as the source of low school literacy in a study by Munns and Mootz (2001). Hearing problems are common for Aboriginal children, which leads some teachers to blame a lack of student participation on laziness rather than the talk-dependent classroom that exacerbates the effects of the hearing problem (Cairney & Ruge, 1997). These studies showed that these teachers believe that the childhood experiences of Indigenous children are deficient and therefore the reason for low school achievement (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998; Bishop et al., 2004; Munns & Mootz, 2001). A study of teachers of young Indigenous students notes that teachers' expectations of how much their Indigenous students can achieve is seen as having an impact on the actual literacy performance of these students (Frigo et al., 2003). Thus the literature points to teachers' understanding of Indigenous students as having a negative impact on student learning. However, the research notes that teachers' understanding of Indigenous students may also contribute to student learning success.

The literature is clear about the importance of teachers' knowledge of their Indigenous students when understanding the elements that are necessary for successful learning in English. When teachers have a full appreciation of the language background of their Indigenous students, they will teach more appropriately; consequently, the literacy of Indigenous students will improve (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004a). Rennie (2006) argues that an improvement in teachers' understanding of what Indigenous students know and how they learn in the community would enable teachers to make connections between the school learning activities in English and their students' community learning experiences and knowledge. This argument is supported by Beresford and Gray (2006), who state that when teachers enable Aboriginal students to use their own language and community learning styles in the classroom, the students achieve more at school. Because students'

engagement in school learning is determined by their interest in the activity and its perceived value (Fredricks et al., 2004), when teachers connect class learning to home learning, Indigenous students will experience more success in learning.

In summary, the research outlined in Section 3.4, above, shows that teachers' understanding of their students influences their expectations of their students. This understanding guides the way they teach and impacts on successful learning. As noted above, teachers of Indigenous students have expressed that the non-English background of Indigenous students adversely affects their learning in class, and that Indigenous students need to have a family background that supports the literacy activities of the school. The critical view teachers of Indigenous students hold, as reported in the literature, appears to form an understanding of Indigenous students in general. Further research is needed to investigate whether this is also a significant part of teachers' understanding of Traditional language students. The contribution of this study to the understanding of teachers in identifying student learning resources is outlined in Section 9.2.1.

The research clearly shows that teachers' understanding of their students is a very important factor in the learning success of their students, in both positive and negative directions. The other main area that the literature highlights as significant for successful student learning is, not surprisingly, the methods teachers implement in their classes. This is discussed in Section 3.5, following.

3.5   Successful teachers

Throughout the literature, recommendations are made for teacher-led strategies and approaches that can help teachers support successful learning for Indigenous students. Connecting learning to the local context, and using the Traditional language and literacy approaches are identified in the literature as methods for successfully teaching Indigenous students.

3.5.1 Connecting to the local context

A large body of research recommends that successful literacy approaches for Indigenous students need to be based on the local context. Researchers such as Faraclas (1997), and Heath and Grant (2000) have argued for such approaches in the Papua New Guinean context, while Malcolm et al. (2003), Walton (1996), and Walton and Eggington (1990) have argued for similar approaches in the Australian context. A number of different researchers highlighted the need for contextualising literacy, as outlined below.

According to Nakata (2002), who reflects on the education of Indigenous students in the Torres Strait, employing teaching approaches that are indigenous to the local area is one answer. He argues for approaches that respond to the local culture and context, meet local needs and build on local resources, with the emphasis on teacher reflection rather than a particular program. Similarly, Watts (1996), in a study of schooling in the South Pacific, showed that successful literacy programs for Indigenous students have mostly arisen in response to the local context, culture, language background and learning needs of local students, rather than in programs introduced from other countries. In Papua New Guinea, too, the involvement of Indigenous people using their literacy expertise and experience has been supported in the research as the best literacy approach (Ahai & Faraclas, 1990). Some teachers of Indigenous students in remote Indigenous communities have developed successful practices. Nakata (2002) suggests there needs to be a way for their successes to be preserved and shared.

Successful learning for Indigenous students requires links to Indigenous culture and learning styles (Beresford & Gray, 2006). Honan (2002) notes that literacy activities for Indigenous students in Papua New Guinea need to be linked to the daily life of the students. When these links are made to students' life experience in classroom literacy activities (Bishop et al., 2004), student learning will be successful. For example, Indigenous students' reading comprehension has been shown to improve when stories are told interactively by linking the literary text to the knowledge the child already has from their life experiences (Freeman & Bochner, 2008). In addition, the actual environments of the school and the Papua New Guinean village community can be used as resources on which literacy learning can be based (Nagai, 2004). In an Australian study,

Frigo et al. (2003) interviewed teachers of Indigenous students in the first three years of schooling. Teachers reported that linking activities to contexts that were familiar to student experience aided learning. Writing based on Indigenous students' life experiences was shown to support literacy. Active learning, where students were encouraged to talk about their learning, was also reported as an ingredient for success in Indigenous students' literacy learning (Frigo et al., 2003).

A study of Year 3 and 4 Indigenous students with an Aboriginal English background showed that literacy activities linked to student life experiences helped improve comprehension and fluency levels (Schott, 2005). Teachers can use Indigenous students' experiences of community learning in classroom teaching by making connections with the oral learning of their Indigenous students first before moving into writing (Rennie, 2006). The importance of linking literacy with students' knowledge and experiences was reported for Indigenous students in a remote Northern Territory community where the students have a Traditional language background (Bowman, Pascoe, & Joy, 1999).

The way Indigenous students learn in their communities can support their learning. The Indigenous students' experience of working together and helping each other to learn, as they do in the local community context, can be used as a strength by teachers in classroom learning (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002). Table 3.8 summarises the points made above about how Indigenous students' experiences of learning in the local context may be used to support their learning in English in class.

Table 3.8   Using the local context as a resource for Indigenous learners

- Linking storybook knowledge to student life experiences
- Using features of the local environment as topics for literacy activities
- Using writing based on student experiences
- Using oral learning as a resource for written learning
- Allowing students to work together in learning activities

The local community itself can help achieve successful Indigenous student learning, when the community and the school operate in partnership for the education of Indigenous students (Sanderson & Allard, 2003). For example, the local Indigenous

community can show teachers who are not indigenous to the community the rich learning experiences already taking place in the community.

When connections are made to Indigenous students' learning in the community, they are more able to engage in classroom learning (Rennie, 2006). Strong connections between class learning and the culture and life experience of Indigenous students motivates students to learn (Munns et al., 2008). Through their life experiences, students build up knowledge that may be used as a learning resource in class (Pirbhai-Illich, 2010). Because there are less obvious uses of English for Indigenous students living in remote communities, teachers need to be more conscious of developing English in school that has application in their students' daily lives, in the present and in the future (Kral, 2009). **At present it is not known whether making connections between class learning and the students' community context forms part of the understanding and practice of teachers in Traditional language communities. Further research into the understandings of parents and former students in the community may provide helpful insights.**

Conversely, when class language practices do not value home learning practices, student learning suffers (Cairney, 2000). When class culture is inconsistent with Indigenous students' community learning experience (Gee, 2001), and when outcomes for Indigenous student learning are based on the language experience of students who speak English as a first language, then the learning success of Indigenous students will be compromised (Byrne & Berlach, 2001). This emphasis in the literature on the importance of connecting to the local context is unmistakeable, and further research may identify current practices that result in the successful learning of students in Traditional language communities. This study explored the extent to which teachers made connections to the local context (Section 8.4.2) and further research may identify current practices that result in the successful learning of students in Traditional language communities.

3.5.2 Traditional language literacy

Teachers may be able to use Traditional languages to support successful learning in English. Although English may be promoted as the language of learning at school, there is evidence that teachers – particularly in the South Pacific – use other languages, such as the Traditional languages or the local Creole, to aid teaching, regardless of these languages' official position (Singh, 1997). In a study of Indigenous students in a Papua New Guinean village (Nagai & Lister, 2004), teachers reported that students who first learned to read in their Traditional language were able to transfer skills, such as phonetics, when they were later taught reading in English. Students who first learned to read in their Traditional language were better readers than students who were taught to read in English only. A study of children beginning to learn in English showed that their English vocabulary could be enhanced by explaining the new English words using the student's first language (Lugo-Neris, Jackson, & Goldstein, 2010). This evidence indicates the strong advantages of using Traditional languages to support successful learning in English. However, using Traditional language literacy in primary school may be complex, as it is in Papua New Guinea – a country of more than 850 Traditional languages. Different students may use different vernaculars (Honan, 2002), therefore it would be difficult for teachers to utilise literacy in different languages in one class. Researching the use of Traditional language literacy by teachers in Traditional language communities would help determine teachers' understanding about whether this may contribute to successful learning.

3.5.3 Whole language and explicit literacy approaches

The literature presents teachers with different strategies that may support successful learning in English for Indigenous students, including Traditional language students. The Australian *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy* in 2005 identified two main approaches to reading that were being taught in mainstream classrooms: the whole language approach, and the explicit teaching of reading skills approach and recommended a balanced approach (Coltheart & Prior, 2007). These two approaches differ in their use of strategies for the teaching of reading, especially emergent reading.

According to Coltheart and Prior (2007), whole language places an emphasis on the context and meaning of the reading and what the student brings to the reading activity from prior learning experiences, with reading literacy skills introduced at a later stage. The explicit literacy skills approach emphasises the teaching of the explicit skills first, after which the context and meaning of the reading is elaborated upon. As defined by Coltheart and Prior, explicit teaching of skills is based on synthetic phonics and sight-word recognition, whereas the whole language approach has students creating meaning through an interaction between what they bring from past experiences and what the text offers (Coltheart & Prior, 2007). In the explicit teaching approach, the student uses synthetic phonics and decoding skills to identify unknown words, while in the whole language approach the student uses their understanding of the sentence to identify unknown words.

The whole language approach attempts to develop literacy knowledge from what the student already knows. To understand a story, students build on clues that they recognise from their own experience. For example, students may predict a word incorrectly, but if their predicted word has a similar meaning to the actual word the students are regarded as understanding the meaning in the sentence. The explicit teaching approach teaches students to decode words so that each word can be accurately determined by using phonetic skills (Coltheart & Prior, 2007).

Teachers' understanding of literacy approaches for successful learning may be enhanced by using whole language as a guide to using context in literacy learning. In this way, whole language can support successful learning by ensuring a connection to the local Indigenous context. Explicit teaching will also support successful learning. As Rowe's (2006) report on the findings of the same inquiry into teaching notes, explicit teaching may ensure that school location and background are no reason for students not to succeed in reading and writing. As both of these approaches have been used in Australia an investigation **by other studies** is required into their effectiveness for teaching reading to Indigenous students with a Traditional language background.

3.5.4 Scaffolding

The use of scaffolding has been recommended to improve Indigenous student literacy because Indigenous students are not skilled in the academic language needed for classroom literacy (Rose, Gray, & Cowey, 1999). Scaffolding enables students to achieve literacy skills which they would be unable to develop by themselves and can be especially effective for students from non-English backgrounds (Many, Dewberry, Lester-Taylor & Coady, 2009). Scaffolding developed from Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (Many et al, 2009). The zone of proximal development is the area between where a student can work independently and the level where the student can work with assistance. Vygotsky proposed that, with assistance, students can move from their current independent level to a higher level (Wertsch, 1984).

In scaffolding, teachers model literate behaviour to assist students to improve their literacy skills. Students jointly construct meaning with their teacher and then a related task is handed over to students for independent work. Teachers' understanding here means they do not expect students to construct meaning entirely from their own learning resources (Koop & Rose, 2008). The Indigenous student learns by observing the teacher scaffolding the literacy skill, then uses the skill in a teacher-supported learning environment (Schott, 2005). The teacher initially gives Indigenous students extensive support and information about the language features of the text. As a result, students are able to read and write more complex texts as their academic language improves (Rose et al., 1999). As students become more proficient, less support is needed from the teacher and students become more responsible for their understanding of the texts (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002).

A high level of scaffolding assists student learning because Indigenous students neither have the experience of reading nor the context of learning with books (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002). The use of scaffolding with Indigenous students has resulted in improvements in literacy for some students (Koop & Rose, 2008). One approach based on scaffolding is Accelerated Literacy (Gray, 2007). With some success, Accelerated Literacy is used extensively in schools in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory and in some schools for Indigenous students in Western Australia.

Accelerated Literacy uses a teaching sequence that demonstrates to the student the roles of reader and writer and aims to engage the student as a reader and writer in the use of academic language (Gray, 2007). Lessons are based on narratives then factual texts; the literacy features of the texts are demonstrated to the students and used as examples to introduce students to the academic language of learning. Students are given text knowledge by the teaching strategies of low and high order literate orientation. Low order literate orientation considers the overall story by looking at features such as illustrations. High order literate orientation looks at the actual text. Students are supported in their learning through the pre-formulation of questions where students are given the information they need to answer questions. The Accelerated Literacy approach claims to enable Indigenous students to read books at higher age-appropriate levels than would otherwise be possible (Mullin & Oliver, 2010). However the implementation of Accelerated Literacy faces the challenges of the extensive training required for teachers and teacher assistants in remote locations and the lack of connection of literacy learning in class to Indigenous students' cultural learning experiences (Cooper, 2008). The range of approaches revealed in the literature indicates a need for current research to establish teachers' understanding of successful literacy approaches and scaffolding for Indigenous students with a Traditional language background. This study does shed some light on teacher understanding of successful literacy approaches (Sections 8.2.3, 8.3.3, 8.4.3) but further research is required.

3.5.5   Encouraging active learning

Another area that emerges in the literature is the need for students to be encouraged to be active learners. An approach that aims to immerse students in English but passively exposes them to English will not be effective (Malcolm, 2003). Organisational strategies such as communicative activities and co-operative group work are a useful approach to move students towards more active and successful learning in class. Barnett (1996a; 1996b) showed how secondary students with a Traditional language background used communicative activities effectively as they interacted in English during language activities. Indigenous students with an Aboriginal English background have been shown to

improve in literacy when their class activities encourage interaction through co-operative group work (Schott, 2005). In Schott's study, teachers engaged students as both the questioners and the responders as a strategy for learning. However, Indigenous students may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with this approach, as it is not a feature of their community learning (Burton, 1996). Indigenous students may also prefer not to use the strategy of asking 'why' questions themselves but to implement the more familiar strategy of observation and imitation to learn (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002).

Indigenous student learning can still be passive when students focus on what needs to be done to complete a learning activity, rather than achieving the learning aims of the activity (Munns et al., 2008). Project-based learning, which enables learning to take place during practical activities, has been shown to help students engage in learning (Heitin, 2012) and could help Indigenous students to participate through active learning. When teachers actively engage their Australian Indigenous students in reading through shared reading, their literacy shows significant progress (Freeman & Bochner, 2008). In Papua New Guinea, too, when specific approaches are designed for Indigenous students, their English literacy improves (Freeman & Bochner, 2008). It seems that the way teachers organise learning activities in their classes is crucial to sustain active learning for Indigenous students. Table 3.9 shows a summative contrast between the interaction activities that lead to passive or active students.

Table 3.9   Organisational strategies for Indigenous classroom interaction

Passive learning	Active learning
▪ Teacher-directed instruction	▪ Group learning
▪ Copying from the board	▪ Constructing notes
▪ Literal questioning and answering	▪ Observation and Imitation
▪ Listening to teacher talk	▪ Communicative activities
▪ Presuming experience of books in homes	▪ Shared reading

Source: Compiled from Burton (1996), Cook and Wallace (1996), Freeman and Bochner (2008), Hopkins et al. (2005), Munns et al. (2008) and Schott (2005)

In summary, to enable successful learning, the literature recommends that teachers appreciate their students' potential to learn and have a clear understanding of their Indigenous students' learning background and experiences. This understanding will

assist teachers to make strong connections between class learning and the community learning context. A variety of approaches are available to teachers to achieve successful teaching and learning, but these need to be designed and modified to meet the learning needs of Indigenous students so that these students can be successful in learning in English. The majority of the research reported here relates to Indigenous students in general. This study focuses specifically on teachers' understanding of the requirements for successful learning for Indigenous students in Traditional language communities (Section 9.2.2).

3.6 Theoretical bases for understanding the learning context

The literature presents three main elements that contribute to the present theoretical bases for understanding the learning context of Indigenous students: first, the extent to which the community learning experiences of Indigenous students may contribute, as resources, to learning in English in school; second, the role of context in the cognitive complexity of learning activities; and third, the value of first-language literacy in achieving English literacy.

3.6.1 Socio-cultural approach

In the literature, the theoretical understanding of the language experience and learning of Indigenous students is based on a sociocultural approach to literacy (Baynham, 1995; Heath, 1986), which makes strong connections to the knowledge and experiences students develop during community learning. The literature promotes an understanding that students, including Indigenous students, do not arrive at school as 'empty buckets' waiting to be filled with knowledge and language experiences. Students develop a world view based on their community, language, social beliefs and religious beliefs (Hewitt, 2000), and on how people live and work together (Alvermann, 2001). Children and their teachers have the opportunity to use these learning experiences in their class learning (Rowe, Fitch, & Bass, 2001). From their community life and learning experiences, students develop 'funds of knowledge' which should be valued and utilised in class learning (Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992). Students learn in their homes and communities and the

knowledge they gain can be used in class learning. By visiting the homes of their students teachers can develop an understanding of this knowledge which can be used in class and can promote the development of stronger connections between school and home (Moll et al, 1992). The importance of a close relationship between schools and home as essential for school success may be common for all Indigenous students, as this relationship has been highlighted as essential for Indigenous students in Canada (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008). Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital highlights the importance of the home and community learning that may contribute to school learning. Bourdieu stresses how the cultural capital of one social class is valued resulting in their educational success, to the detriment of other social classes with a cultural capital that is not recognised or valued (Gunn, 2005). The funds of knowledge and cultural capital concepts are important for Indigenous learners as the value of their home learning may not be recognised at school. The use of home and community knowledge at school is specifically recommended for Indigenous students (Bishop et al., 2004). 'Artifactual' literacy is one approach that uses community learning experiences as class learning resources. Here literacy is developed by using artifacts from the cultural and social experiences in class literacy learning. A connection is made between class learning and community learning (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011).

The importance of making connections with Indigenous community learning is supported by the research outlined in Section 3.5.1. This research shows that when class learning does make connections with community learning, Indigenous student learning is more successful. When class learning does not make connections with community learning experiences, students have to adapt to a very unfamiliar learning environment and their class learning suffers (Heath & Grant, 2000). A survey of Australian schools (Comber & Hill, 2000; Cross, 2009) and Papua New Guinean schools (Maxwell & Yoko, 2004) revealed there were few, if any, links with community learning in the class learning of Indigenous students. When teachers create a class learning environment that does not value community learning, they are taking a monolinguistic perspective (Clyne, 2006). The monolinguistic perspective for Indigenous students would only value language experiences in English and would therefore see no value in Indigenous students' community language experiences. There needs to be more research **by other studies** into

the extent that teachers of Indigenous students in Traditional language communities take a sociocultural perspective and value community learning experiences.

3.6.2   The BICS/CALP distinction

The relationship between English as an Additional Language (EAL) students' understanding of the context of a learning activity and the activity's level of cognitive complexity has been considered in the literature. Context and cognitive complexity of learning activities for students have been explained in the distinction between social communication and academic language (Cummins, 1980, 2008). This discussion predates the recognition of EAL/D and does not specifically mention Indigenous students but is of interest because the literature has highlighted the significance of the contrast between class and community learning for Indigenous students (Section 3.3).

The understanding of the role of social communication and academic language is largely based on the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008). BICS are the language skills an EAL student requires to converse in social interactions. Conversations that use BICS often take place in the actual context of the topic of the conversation; for example, a conversation about shopping that takes place in a shop is a BICS conversation. The EAL student's comprehension of the conversation is supported by the non-verbal clues, such as facial expressions, as well as the clues from the conversation in which the participants are situated. Conversely, a conversation that requires CALP skills usually does not take place in the context of the topic of the conversation. CALP conversations require academic language and have greater cognitive demands than BICS conversations because the EAL student is supported by few, if any, contextual clues in the situation where the conversation is taking place (Cummins, 2008). An example of a conversation requiring CALP skills is a classroom discussion on preferential voting which would be complex.

The BICS/CALP distinction arose as teachers noticed that EAL students who were presumed to be proficient in English based on the observation of their social conversations did not seem to be able to transfer that skill to classroom learning (Cummins, 2008). While BICS contribute to conversational fluency in social interactions, the basic skills are not enough for academic fluency in the classroom, which requires CALP

skills. The language demands on an EAL student in a classroom activity depend on whether the activity requires BICS or CALP skills, the degree of context present and the cognitive demands (Roessingh & Elgie, 2009). These elements are often presented in a diagram as a way of illustrating the BICS/CALP distinction, and the elements of context and cognitive demand. BICS conversations are cognitively easier because they are supported to some extent by social interaction and context clues, as represented in Figure 3.1. CALP conversations, however, rely more on student understanding of the learning content and have fewer social interaction and context clues to assist understanding for EAL students.

Cognitively undemanding

(based on more social interaction and less on content)

A

Mostly oral and visual content.

BICS: An oral conversation in the context of the topic. Understanding is supported by non-visual clues, e.g. a class trip to a shop and shopping is the topic of the discussion.

B

Mostly written content.

BICS: A social interaction with fewer context clues, e.g. students filling in an order form for shopping items.

Learning activity has context clues

C

Includes oral and visual content.

Academic content vocabulary

Complex language structures

CALP: Classroom lessons that are supported by diagrams and illustrations.

D

Mostly written content.

Academic and abstract language

CALP: Classroom lessons that have no visual support. Mostly based on written texts but also include lectures without illustrations.

Learning activity has no context clues

Cognitively demanding

(more content, less social interaction)

Figure 3.1   The BICS/CALP distinction   Source: Developed from Aukerman (2007), Cline & Frederickson (1996) and Cummins (2008)

Quadrant A is pure BICS, being based on a social interaction and taking place in the context being discussed. Quadrant A is the simplest cognitive activity, as many contextual clues are present in the social interaction. Quadrant B is still cognitively simple because it is based in a social interaction but has less contextual clues because it is written rather than oral. Quadrant C is still an oral or visual activity but is more cognitively complex as it does not take place in the context on which it is focused. Quadrant D is pure CALP, as no context clues are given or illustrated. Quadrant D has the most cognitively

difficult task, as it is all based on content with no social interaction. The only context clues are given by the text itself.

Some research has shown that the distinction between BICS and CALP may actually misdirect teachers (Aukerman, 2007). If teachers believe that their students are not able to progress until they have CALP skills, they may wait until the student is believed to be ready. The main premise that CALP activities have no context is also challenged. All classroom learning activities are said to have an element of context that needs to be attended to by teachers (Aukerman, 2007). The challenge for the classroom is to provide the means by which students can link the classroom learning to the learning resources they have from their own languages and previous learning experiences.

The theory of BICS and CALP highlights for teachers the importance of identifying the skills EAL students require to understand what they are learning in class. Teachers need to identify the learning activities requirements for the deployment of the social communication skills of BICS and the academic language skills of CALP. Teachers need to assess the level of contextual clues available to support EAL students during the learning activity. The fewer contextual clues available and the more academic language skills required will increase the cognitive difficulty of the learning activity for EAL students. The BICS and CALP model is of particular relevance to teachers of students in Traditional language communities as it highlights an important distinction between school and community learning. Most of the learning in the community is in Quadrant A (Figure 3.1), as it takes place within the context of the activity or knowledge being learned; in class, most learning may be in Quadrant D, as it does not take place in the context of the topic being discussed, and students may not have any previous experience of that context. The other point of relevance for teachers in Traditional language communities is that students' progress in English may appear to be faster than it is in reality, as their progress may be in BICS language but not CALP language.

3.6.3   Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) and Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP)

The literature recognises that children bring to school language abilities that are based on their experience of the world, which they use to comprehend class language (Gee, 2001).

The question of whether students are able to use literacy skills gained in their community language in the classroom learning of their second language has resulted in the theories of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) and Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP). Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) is the theory that students who speak two languages share language skills and literacy concepts between both languages (Roessingh & Elgie, 2009). That is, if students understand a literacy concept in one language, they do not need to relearn that concept in the second language. For example, if EAL students understand, in their first language, the concept of reading and the purpose of books, the students do not need to learn the concept of reading and the purpose of books when they begin to learn in English. Similarly, if students understand in their own language that letters form words, they will understand in class when letters are used to form English words. Since students can transfer skills and concepts from their first language to their second language, then the first language is a resource for learning the second language. Improvements in the students' first language literacy will support improvements in class in English (Ndamba, 2008).

The theory of Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) states that the literacy skills students have gained in their first language are not available for use in learning in their second language (Norbert, 2005). In this theory, languages are seen as separate and literacy skills are specific to a particular language, so the literacy skills and concepts acquired in the first language cannot be transferred to the other language but must be relearned. Therefore the student's first language cannot provide resources for learning in English in class. The SUP model would suggest, for example, that if students learn to read in their first language this will not assist them when they begin to learn to read in English at school. Studies of bilingual students have not supported the inability to transfer literacy skills as proposed by the SUP model (Norbert, 2005). In particular, a study of a young Chinese student beginning to learn in English showed that the student shared literacy concepts between the two languages, even though Chinese and English are very different languages (Buckwalter & Lo, 2002).

Whether teachers base their understanding of EAL students on CUP or SUP has significant implications for their utilisation of their students' first language in class learning in English. A teacher with a CUP understanding will attempt to utilise their EAL

students' literacy skills in their first language, which students have developed as internal resources (Cummins, 2008) from their learning experiences. These teachers will encourage development of skills in the EAL students' first language. Conversely, teachers who base their understanding on SUP will not see any value in attempting to access skills in their students' first language. In fact, they would argue that time spent on the first language would be better spent on learning in the second language. Teachers with a CUP understanding would provide external resources (Cummins, 2008) which complement and support students' internal resources. On the other hand, teachers with a SUP understanding would provide external resources without any reference to the internal resources students have developed.

Although there has been no research into whether EAL teachers base their understanding on CUP or SUP, there has been limited research on teachers' use of their students' first language when learning English in class. The first language of Indigenous students is sometimes not seen as a resource. One study revealed that Indigenous students were given speech pathology tests as they were thought to have a medical problem with their speech, whereas the problem was actually the difference between the child's language environment and the school language environment (Gould, 2008). Rennie (2006) shows how the experience of hunting, which takes place in the Traditional language, utilises a number of learning skills including recounting, questioning, explanations and procedures – all skills that can be built upon in writing in the classroom. In Papua New Guinea, research with students with a Traditional language background showed that they were able to transfer vernacular literacy skills into English learning (Nagai & Lister, 2004). In particular, phonetic skills were transferred and children who had been taught to read first in their vernacular did better in reading than other children who had been first taught in English.

EAL teachers' appreciation of the value of first-language literacy skills will influence whether they use these literacy skills as a resource for their students' learning in English. As already noted, there are a few studies (Lugo-Neris et al., 2010; Nagai & Lister, 2004) which show that some teachers of Indigenous students do utilise literacy skills from their students' first language. However, teachers' understanding of the

usefulness of Traditional language literacy skills remains a relatively unexplored area of research.

This investigation of teachers' understanding is based on the socio-cultural approach to literacy. The socio-cultural approach highlights the value of students' community language and learning experiences and their usefulness for class learning. In this study, teachers' understanding of the English language and learning experience of their students is determined by investigating the teachers' appreciation and evaluation of their students' experience of English and learning in community and at school. The Grounded theory approach was used to give teachers the opportunity to share their understanding as explained in the Methodology chapter.

3.7   Research questions

 The review of literature reveals that teachers do have some understanding of the general English experience of Indigenous students and the factors that contribute to successful learning in English. Whether this understanding contributes to teachers' understanding of Indigenous students in Traditional language communities needs to be investigated.

Students living in Traditional language communities have a unique experience of English due to their limited opportunities to experience English outside of class and in their communities. Throughout this literature review, gaps in knowledge were highlighted in our understanding of the English experience of these Indigenous students in Traditional language communities and the elements that contribute to successful learning. There were no theories, hypotheses or models of teachers' understanding in the literature that were based on the context of students living in Traditional language communities. This study endeavoured to fill these gaps in understanding by investigating how teachers' understanding of the extent of the English environment informs their appreciation of their students' language and learning context. Two main research questions emerge for the investigation for teachers' understanding of the extent of the English environment their students' experience, and the impact this English environment experience has on teachers' understanding of teaching and learning. The two research questions are:

1.   What do teachers understand is the extent of the English environment that their Indigenous Traditional language students experience?

2.   What do teachers understand are the essentials of successful learning for students who experience this extent of the English environment?

The review of literature and the researcher's experience of teaching in Traditional language communities presuppose sub-questions for each research question. Research Question 1, investigates the influence of distance on Traditional language students' experience of the English environment, so it requires an exploration of how teachers understand their students' opportunities to experience English, the benefits of learning in and using English, and the contrast between the school learning and community learning contexts. This investigation was guided by the sub-questions shown below.

1.   What do teachers understand is the extent of the English environment that their Indigenous Traditional language students experience?

   a.   What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English?

   b.   What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English?

   c.   What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning?

Research Question 2, investigates teachers' understanding of the essentials of successful learning for students, so it involves exploring how teachers understand the ways in which students and teachers contribute to learning success. The sub-questions guiding this research question are shown below.

2.   What do teachers understand are the essentials of successful learning for students who experience this extent of the English environment?

   a.   What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student?

   b.   What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher?

Teachers' understanding is explored through the participation in the research of those most closely involved in the education of Indigenous students – the teachers themselves. Teachers and educators in this study were selected from schools in north-west Australia and in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, where there are Indigenous communities with Traditional language environments.

* * *

These research questions were used to guide the three phases of the data gathering: semi-structured interviews, focus groups and critical groups. These are outlined in the next chapter, which details the methodology of this study.

4   Methodology

This study explored teachers' understanding in two areas: one, the English experience of Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities; and two, the essential requirements for successful learning in English. The study was based on grounded theory and used a case study approach in which data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and critical groups. To ensure the quality of the data, the research was guided by internal principles and steps were taken to guarantee the validity of the research.

4.1   Case study method

As the literature review in the previous chapter indicated, teachers' understanding of the English experience of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background, and of the essential requirements for successful learning in English, develops within the context of Traditional language communities. Therefore a qualitative research approach using a case study method was used because it enabled research with participants who are particular to that specific context (Audet & Amboise, 2001) – in this case, teachers and educators who work in Traditional language communities. Additionally, case studies are an efficient tool for expanding understanding on a particular topic (Gray, 2005). Personal theories develop as a result of actual practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2004), so these teachers' and educators' personal theories about their students' English experience and their learning could be explored through interview and group discussion.

Most of the studies in the Literature Review that involved investigating schools and teachers in Indigenous contexts used a case study approach. These included Australian case studies such as those conducted by Muhlhausler (1996a) and Kral (2009) and Papua New Guinean case studies by Hopkins et al (2005) and Maxwell & Yoko (2004). This study's investigation of teachers' understanding in a specific context followed this trend and adopted the case study approach.

Case studies can be used as a means to represent the reality of a situation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2002). For this research, the case study explored teachers'

understanding of the English experience of Indigenous students attending schools in Traditional language communities. Because the study involved participants at a number of different locations, it is regarded as a multi-site study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The teachers and other educators involved were selected from two schools in north-west Australia and eight schools in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. This study began with a broad focus on the general nature of teachers' understanding of their students' experience of the English environment, then narrowed its focus to specific features of students' experience of English in the community and at school (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The use of the case study approach helped facilitate both the description of specific features and the relationships between them (Gray, 2005).

This case study investigation was guided by the two main research questions which gave participants the opportunity to discuss their understanding of their students' English environment experience and their understanding of the essential requirements for successful student learning. Each research question had sub-questions which helped focus the case study investigation.

4.2   Theoretical basis for the study: Grounded theory

As was outlined in the study context, the English experience of students living in Traditional language communities is very different to that of EAL/D students who experience more English in their lives. Consequently, theories that endeavour to guide teachers' understanding for EAL/D students may not be appropriate for students who live in Traditional language communities. Rather than testing existing theories proposed for Indigenous students generally (as described in the literature review), the aim of this study was to give teachers who have experience teaching Traditional language students the opportunity to share their understanding. This study, therefore, was not guided by existing theories, but rather by the data provided by the participants.

The use of grounded theory for this study supported the case study approach. The study investigated an area of knowledge where there is a significant gap in understanding. Grounded theory enhanced the gathering of data in the case study as it enables a type of inductive approach in which understanding is developed from the data

(Walker & Myrick, 2006) and based on the responses of the study participants. This approach is an alternative to data being developed from the investigation of existing theories and preconceived understandings (Charmaz, 2006; Cohen et al., 2002). As a result, grounded theory was chosen as the theoretical basis for this study. Grounded theory was especially suited to this study because, as noted in the literature review, the existing theories and models of understanding were all based on Indigenous students generally, not on the specific context of students living in Traditional language communities. An investigation of teachers' understanding could therefore only take place by collecting data about participants' experiences and understanding. Although this study did not aim to develop a theory, it did propose to strengthen teachers' understanding of the English experience and requirements for successful learning of Indigenous students who live in Traditional language communities. This study benefited from using a grounded theory approach, as teachers' understanding could be developed from the analysis of participant responses.

This study's use of grounded theory as based on the understandings of Charmaz (2006) and Cohen et al., (2002) which include the developments in the theory since it was proposed by Glaser and Strauss 40 years ago (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory, as it has evolved, still places participant involvement and data collection as central to creating understanding - but also acknowledges that it is inevitable that researchers are influenced by existing knowledge, and this existing knowledge can be tested by the data collected.

While this study was not guided by existing theories, it would be naïve to presume that there is no existing knowledge in this area of study; accordingly, this researcher conducted a literature review to determine relevant existing knowledge. A study based on grounded theory can benefit from such a review, as it helps identify gaps in knowledge and hence identify areas needing exploration (Thornberg, 2012). While the initial literature review was written prior to data collection it was substantially changed after data collection to search for existing knowledge that was consistent with the data collected. The final literature review was completed after the data were collected and analysed.

The literature did not dictate the research questions. The research questions were formed to guide the research in the areas of teacher understanding that the study was investigating. By developing a framework of understanding predominantly on the analysis of data collected and not existing literature, this study was consistent with the understanding of grounded theory as presented by Glaser and Strauss (Charmaz, 2006). The framework for understanding was developed from the analysis of the data collected from participants, and not pre-existing knowledge.

The English experience of students in Traditional language communities requires a clear understanding of the context in which teachers live and on which they base their understanding. This clear understanding could not be achieved by a few visits for research purposes to the schools and the communities. Grounded theory helped to provide a sharper appreciation of the context by encouraging a first-hand approach, leading to a richer understanding of the participants' perspective (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher developed this rich understanding of the participants' perspective by conducting the interviews, focus groups and critical groups himself, and by carefully listening to the recordings and transcribing them. The researcher also took time to understand the background of participants and the contexts in which they worked, drawing on his own experience as a teacher in the areas in which the participants taught. Guided by grounded theory, the researcher was able to develop a deep appreciation of the context of the study and an understanding of teachers' situations in these communities.

Grounded theory guided each stage of the data collection (Section 4.5), coding (Section 4.6.2) and data analysis (Section 4.9). Grounded theory uses codes to compare and categorise data. Codes bring together similar data and new codes can be created for data that does not fit the existing codes. In a grounded theory approach, analysis begins with coding to determine connections between codes and to identify important understandings (Walker & Myrick, 2006); as explained in Section 4.9, this was the approach used in this study. After the interviews, information in the codes was sorted and compared. New codes were then formed, and these guided the subsequent data collection phases. The study followed the grounded theory approach by analysing data and then collecting more data to confirm and extend the analysis (Oktay, 2012).

Consistent with grounded theory, the study began with a very wide focus in the interviews. Guided by the interview results, the focus was then narrowed: the data from the interviews was analysed to determine important references, which were then presented to focus groups for discussion. The results of the interviews and focus groups were then analysed to form statements of teachers' understanding, which were presented to the critical groups (Charmaz, 2006). The critical groups narrowed the focus further by considering general statements which summarised different aspects of the data, rather than from the data references themselves. The codes developed during data collection were guided by grounded theory; these codes are used in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 to present the results of the study.

4.3   Processes

The success of this study's use of the grounded theory approach depended on the quality of the data collected. The quality of the data collected during the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups was enhanced by following the guiding principles of research design from complexity science, derived from the teacher education model developed by Clarke, Erickson, Collins and Phelan (2005). **The complexity science principles support the grounded theory approach by giving participants from different backgrounds the opportunity to share their understanding of their common experience of the area investigated by this study.** These guiding principles are internal redundancy and internal diversity, decentralised control, enabling constraints, and neighbour interaction. The terms are explained below.

This study utilised both internal redundancy and internal diversity in the selection of participants. *Internal redundancy* is achieved by ensuring that all participants share a common experience so that codes can be developed using data from different sources. In this study, internal redundancy was realised by the selection of teachers and other educators who shared the common experience of teaching in Traditional language communities. However, when internal redundancy is achieved by selecting participants with the same experience, there is a risk that data saturation may occur too early. Data saturation is the point at which new interviews are not revealing new data but simply

repeat data collected in earlier interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Early data saturation was avoided in this study by employing *internal diversity*; that is, selecting participants from different backgrounds, which helped ensure a range of involvement was available. By selecting a variety of educators with experience in Traditional language communities – experienced teachers and recent teacher graduates, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Papua New Guinean and Australian, male and female – more diverse data was obtained, and data saturation was not reached too early. Utilising internal redundancy and internal diversity principles ensured the participants involved all had experience as educators in Traditional language communities, but their diverse backgrounds resulted in data that drew on a range of perspectives while remaining focused on English experience and learning in Traditional language communities.

Study participants were affirmed and given control over the information they provided by following the internal principle of *decentralised control.* Decentralised control aims both to encourage participants and to give them authority over the data they provide. In all the phases of data collection, the researcher affirmed the knowledge of the participants and gave them control over the information they provided. For the interviews, focus groups and critical groups, the researcher had stimulus questions but the participants exercised control over which questions were responded to and the areas covered. Interview participants had great control over their contribution as they were given copies of their interview transcripts and had the opportunity to edit and add to their interviews. The participants did not have total freedom and control, however, as the study needed to stay focused on Indigenous students' English experience and learning in Traditional language communities.

Study focus was achieved by establishing *enabling constraints*, which set parameters on the areas that were discussed so that the focus remained on the study area. These enabling constraints were enforced during the data collection phases by having a semi-structured plan. A list of key questions for the interviews, interview quotes and questions for the focus groups, and main points for the critical groups were used to keep participants concentrated on the research questions. Decentralised control gave participants the opportunity to share their experiences, while the enabling constraints ensured that the data collected provided insights into the research questions.

This study used focus groups and critical groups to benefit from *neighbour interaction*, which was achieved by giving the participants the opportunity to listen and respond to each other, generating new ideas. The focus groups experienced neighbour interaction through the opportunity to respond to interview participant quotes, and statements made by other focus group participants. In the critical groups, participants had the opportunity to discuss the main points from the earlier data collection phases and the comments made by other participants. The focus groups and critical groups explored different facets of teachers' understanding together and, through neighbour interaction, expanded on existing data and created new data.

The guiding principles of complexity science complemented and supported grounded theory. Grounded theory aims to place the data collected from participants at the centre of the study. The complexity science principles were a useful tool for enhancing participation by ensuring participants from diverse backgrounds (internal diversity) could share their understanding of a common experience (internal redundancy). As grounded theory recommends, participants were given control over the information they provided (decentralised control) while keeping their focus on the area of their understanding (enabling constraints).

4.4 Participant selection

There were 47 participants in the study, all working in either the desert region of north-west Australia or the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. The participants in the study were a diverse group: Australian and Papua New Guinean, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, teachers and other educators such as teacher assistants. The participant group consisted of 33 teachers, 5 teacher assistants, 2 principals, 5 teachers' college academics and 2 education consultants. There were 24 residents of Papua New Guinea and 23 residents of Australia. There were 32 Indigenous participants, consisting of 27 Papua New Guinean Melanesians and 5 Australian Aboriginals. There were 15 non-Indigenous participants, all Australian. In total, participants had experience with Indigenous students with a Traditional language background in at least 17 different schools and communities. Participant characteristics are presented in Table 4.1. In addition, many participants had

taught in more than one school. Some of the participants were involved in more than one of the data collection phases of the study. The phases that each participant was involved in, using fictitious names to preserve their anonymity, are listed in Appendix 1.

Table 4.1   Characteristics of study participants

Profession	Place of residence	Indigenous background	Gender	Age range	Years of experience
Teachers 33 Teacher assistants 5 Academics 5 Consultants 2 Principals 2	Australia 23 Papua New Guinea 24	Australian Indigenous 5 PNG Indigenous 27 Non-Indigenous 15	Females: 31 Males: 16	20-30: 19 31-40: 9 41-50: 16 50+: 3	0-5: 15 6-10: 16 11-20: 9 21+: 7

While all participants had the common experience of teaching in Traditional language communities, Table 4.1 shows that the participants were a diverse group. This range allowed a variety of perspectives to be gathered.

Traditional language communities and their schools are far from urban centres. This distance impacted on the availability of participants, as transport and travel challenges made access to participants difficult. Long distances separate the schools in north-west Australia; while the Papua New Guinean schools are relatively close together, travel can be difficult. All of these factors meant that the study was only able to involve participants who were accessible to the researcher.

4.5   Data collection

There were three data collection phases: one, interviews; two, focus groups; and three, critical groups, with some participants involved in one or more of the data collection phases. The aim of the interview phase was to gather data from teachers as they described their students' experiences of English and learning in Traditional language communities. Focus groups were conducted to explore and extend the significant issues related to the research questions that were raised during the interviews. Critical groups discussed the validity and relevance of the significant points derived from the interviews

and focus groups by the researcher. These phases of data collection and their functions are listed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2   The three phases of data collection

Phase	Data collection
Phase One: Interviews	Interviews were conducted in Australia and Papua New Guinea where teachers described their students' experience of English in their communities and schools.
Phase Two: Focus groups	Two focus groups were conducted in Australia and two in Papua New Guinea to explore and extend descriptions from the interviews.
Phase Three: Critical groups	Two critical groups in Australia and one in Papua New Guinea discussed and evaluated the main points from the first two phases.

The purpose of the three phases of data collection was to gather and refine data to answer the research questions by describing teachers' understanding of students' experience of the English environment, and to determine the essential requirements for successful learning in class.

4.6   Interviews phase

The first phase of data collection was the conducting of interviews. Seven non-Indigenous teachers in the desert region of north-west Australia were interviewed in November 2006, and thirteen Indigenous teachers working in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea were interviewed in April 2007. The interviews were held in two isolated Australian schools, selected because the researcher had access to these schools. The research did not involve teachers from other schools, as the nearest Aboriginal school in a Traditional language community was a six-hour drive away over unsealed roads. The Papua New Guinean Highlands, on the other hand, is a densely populated region, and there are many schools with students from Traditional language environments. In Papua New Guinea, five of the teachers interviewed worked at the same school, while the remaining eight taught in different schools in the Highlands. Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by the researcher.

4.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

This study used semi-structured interviews so that participants were able to speak about the areas they saw as relevant, while remaining within the focus of their understanding of their students' English experience and the requirements for successful learning. This semi-structured interview approach was especially suitable for the Papua New Guinean participants who were all Indigenous, as it catered for their oral tradition, that is, their experiences of sharing knowledge orally rather than in written form. The study's use of the semi-structured interview approach allowed probing, so that more detailed information could be obtained from the participants' answers to questions (Gray, 2005). The questions asked ranged from open-ended questions to more specific questions.

Giving participants control of the information they shared and asking further specific questions to explore the information they provided is consistent with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Open-ended questions were used to allow interview participants to express freely their understanding of their students' experience of English. The study's open-ended questions, defined by Stringer (2004) as 'grand tour' questions, allowed participants to provide a general overview of their understanding. Open-ended questions gave study participants the opportunity to provide valuable data from their experience (O'Leary, 2004) and from their own perspective (Cohen et al., 2002). The more specific questions, described as 'mini-tour' questions by Stringer (2004), were used to get more detail on participants' answers and to explore participants' understanding. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the collection and coding of data relevant to the research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The interview questions were based on the research questions and were outlined in a plan. Each of the research questions was divided into sub-questions to enable different aspects of the research questions to be specifically investigated. Interview questions were then constructed for each of the research sub-questions. Research sub-questions for Research Question 1, and the corresponding interview questions, are listed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3   Research Question 1: Sub-questions and interview questions

1. What do teachers understand is the extent of the English environment that their Indigenous Traditional language students experience?	
Research sub-questions	**Interview questions**
1a. What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English?	▪ Which languages do students use at school? ▪ What languages do students use when they are at home? ▪ When do your students use English in the community? ▪ When do your students use English at school? ▪ How close or far is English in the daily lives of your students? ▪ Compare the literacy of Indigenous students who come from town schools to the students who come from the local area.
1b. What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English?	▪ At school, students and teachers use English to learn about other subjects. How successful is this? ▪ What are the benefits of using English as a language of learning? ▪ What are the disadvantages of using English as a language of learning? ▪ What are the main reasons that English is used as the language of learning? ▪ How useful would you say English is to the students when they finish at this school?
1c. What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning?	▪ Compare the learning of the student at home with the learning in your classroom. ▪ How do you think the student's life experience affects the way that English is experienced in the classroom?

Teachers' understanding of the limited opportunities of their students to experience English was directly investigated by asking teachers about the use of language in the school and in the community, and by asking them to consider the proximity of English to the lives of their students. Questions were constructed to give participants the opportunity to speak positively of their students' English experience, rather than infer a limited or deficient English experience. The question of the proximity of English to the lives of their students was only asked after the teachers had the opportunity to explain how English is used in the lives of their students. In this way, the potential of the researcher to influence teachers' descriptions of the English experience of their students was removed.

Research Question 2 probed teachers' understanding of the essentials for successful learning in English by students. It was investigated by the use of sub-questions and relevant interview questions. These sub-questions and the interview questions are listed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4   Research Question 2: Sub-questions and interview questions

2. What do teachers understand are the essentials of successful learning for students who experience this extent of the English environment?	
Research sub-questions	**Interview questions**
2a. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student?	▪ What are the characteristics of a student who learns well in your class? ▪ Are any of these characteristics connected to their use of English? ▪ When a student is in Year 7 in this school, what do you think are the essential skills for the student in using English as a tool for learning and understanding? ▪ What are the characteristics of students who find learning difficult in your class? ▪ Are any of these characteristics connected to their use of English? ▪ What learning skills and abilities do students use at home that helps them in learning at school?
2b. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher?	▪ To be a successful teacher teaching students using English, what do you need to do? ▪ Describe the best classroom environment for teaching and learning English as a language of learning here.

These interview questions were constructed so that participants would be encouraged to speak of learning success rather than learning failure. The interview questions were used as a guide, and the actual questions asked depended on participant responses. Probing questions were formed during the interviews by the researcher to obtain more specific detail about participants' answers. Each interview took between 60 and 90 minutes. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the interview and gave a transcript to the participant, who had the opportunity to edit or add to the interview. In Papua New Guinea, three interview participants edited some answers and added to others. In Australia, the researcher asked one participant some clarifying questions. Each

of these participants wanted the final transcript to be the actual transcript used. The other participants did not want to alter their transcripts.

4.6.2 Coding

To prepare for data analysis, the data collected in the three phases was coded. Coding is the process of labelling data with codes that identify the data, enabling comparison between different data (Charmaz, 2006). Coding began with the identification and description of *pre-codes* before data collection (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). After the interviews were transcribed, they were coded according to these pre-codes. However, the pre-codes could not cater for all the data collected, so *post-codes* were created after data collection. As suggested by Charmaz (2006), data was first coded according to what was preconceived – that is, the pre-codes – and post-codes were then created for information that emerged during the interviews.

In preparation for coding, each sub-question was given a pre-code. These pre-codes were developed before the interviews and were derived from the literature review and the researcher's experience. While the researcher's understanding was the result of working in Traditional language communities, the understanding gained from the literature review was mainly of Indigenous students generally, not Traditional language students specifically. Twelve pre-codes were prepared prior to the interviews. Post-codes were developed by studying the transcripts for any patterns that were related to the research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). When there was not a suitable pre-code to categorise the emerging information, a post-code was created to label this information. Seventeen post-codes were created after the interviews to contain data that did not fit into pre-codes. After the data collection was finished, pre-codes and post-codes were merged based on their relevance to the research question and the analysis that occurred during the three phases of the data collection. This resulted in a list of sixteen final codes.

For example, Research Question 1b has the pre-codes *Language of learning* and *English relevance*. After the interviews, the post-codes of *Understanding*, *English utility* and *Power language* were added. Then the pre- and post-codes were merged into the final codes *School benefits*, *Community benefits* and *Future benefits*. As shown in Table 4.5, the codes were based on analyses of patterns and similarities, and grouped into

categorical themes (DeNardo & Levers, 2002) according to the applicable research sub-questions. The research sub-questions and their pre-codes, post-codes and final codes are listed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Research sub-questions and codes

1. What do teachers understand is the extent of the English environment that their Indigenous Traditional language students experience?			
Research sub-questions	**Pre-codes**	**Post-codes**	**Final codes**
1a. What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English?	▪ English interaction ▪ Home language ▪ Home language at school ▪ Town students	▪ Aboriginal English/ Tok Pisin	▪ English exposure ▪ Traditional language ▪ Student comparison
1b. What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English?	▪ Language of learning ▪ English relevance	▪ Understanding ▪ English utility ▪ Power language	▪ School benefits ▪ Community benefits ▪ Future benefits
1c. What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning?	▪ Home	▪ Learning community ▪ Home support	▪ Learning activities ▪ Learning area ▪ Home support
2. What do teachers understand are the essentials of successful learning for students who experience this extent of the English environment?			
2a. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student?	▪ Successful student ▪ Failure ▪ Home learning	▪ Successful experiences ▪ Dependent student	▪ Learner confidence ▪ Learner shame ▪ Learning skills ▪ Literacy skills transfer
2b. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher?	▪ Successful teacher ▪ Classroom teaching	▪ Teaching for achievement ▪ Learning school ▪ Learning support ▪ Immersion ▪ Schooled	▪ Teacher models ▪ Translation ▪ Scaffolding

As recommended by grounded theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006), codes were used to classify and compare information, and enable the inclusion of unanticipated information from the study participants.

The interviewing and coding process took place in two stages. The first step, interviewing, was carried out to ensure participants were able to share their understanding as they wished, while the researcher retained control so that the information gathered was consistent with the study research questions. Prior to coding, participants were given the chance to check their transcripts to ensure transcripts conveyed their understanding accurately. The second step, the coding process, was structured so that data organisation and analysis could begin after interviewing by using pre-codes and post-codes. These steps are listed below.

Step 1: Interviewing

1. Semi-structured interview question plan was developed with questions for each research question.

2. Pre-codes were determined for the interview questions.

3. Interviews were conducted and transcribed.

4. Participants were given the opportunity to edit and add to their transcripts.

5. Interview transcripts were entered into NVivo software.

Step 2: Coding process

6. Interview data was coded according to pre-codes.

7. Post-codes were determined for data not covered by pre-codes.

8. Post-codes were classified according to the research question they related to.

9. Short descriptions were written for each of the pre-codes and post-codes.

10. Similar pre-codes and post-codes were merged together to form final codes.

11. The information gathered and coded during the interviews phase was used as stimulus material for the focus groups.

4.7   Focus groups

When the interviews were completed, focus groups were used to explore and elaborate the information that was analysed as important to teachers' understanding. This is an approach recommended by grounded theory (Oktay, 2012). As a result of their interaction as a group, the focus groups created new information relevant to the research questions.

Each focus group began its discussion by considering the understandings analysed from the interviews. Focus groups were presented with quotes from the interviews that were significant in terms of the research questions, then asked questions based on these quotes. This was the only direction the researcher gave to the focus groups, other than answering clarifying questions from participants. The only other intervention from the researcher was to check that all participants had a chance to speak. Focus group participants were free to answer or not answer questions and the group was free to discuss whatever issues they wished. The researcher only intervened when the group's focus had significantly left the area of the research questions; this only occurred a few times overall.

4.7.1   The focus group process

This study used focus groups because they provided the opportunity for in-depth, qualitative interviews involving a small number of carefully selected participants. Understanding was derived from participant interaction, which drove the process; the researcher did not lead the focus groups (Cohen et al., 2002). As the majority of focus group participants were Indigenous, the process allowed participants to discuss their understanding in an atmosphere similar to that of Indigenous discussions, that is, all participants had speaking rights, participants were in control, and participants were free to move in and out of the roles of active participants and spectators, as occurs in Indigenous discussions (Malcolm, Kessaris, & Hunter, 2003).

The focus group participants had the common experience of being educators in schools located in Traditional language communities. Because the appropriate number of focus groups should be determined by the diversity of the participants (Morgan, 1997),

there were four groups, each one made up of a distinct group of educators available for participation in the focus groups. In the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, one group was formed of participants from the interviews, while the other group's participants were not part of the interviews. The Australian Teachers Focus Group in north-west Australia did not have any teachers from the interviews, as by the time the focus groups were formed the interview teachers had all left the region. The second Australian group was made up of Aboriginal teacher assistants.

Focus groups began with participants reading the key references from the interviews. The questions were distributed one by one on a piece of paper after discussion on the previous question was finished, so that participants were not distracted by a list of questions. The questions were read out aloud by the researcher to help participant concentration. These questions and references were used when necessary as discussion prompts. However, prompting was not often needed as the discussion naturally moved onto issues the researcher had intended to raise, and participants did not need interview quotes or questions as discussion starters. Interview quotes and questions were only presented when necessary to keep the discussion going. The aim of the focus groups was not for the researcher to study *how* the participants discussed the issues but *what* they discussed, in order to determine whether they validated what had been said in interviews. The basis of grounded theory is to generate understanding from the participants (Cohen et al., 2002) through their elaborations and through new information they share.

The PNG focus groups were held in April 2008 at a school in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. The focus groups contained teachers from the same school, with the exception of one teacher. Travel difficulties meant that teachers from other schools were not able to attend. When participants were invited to be part of the PNG focus groups, they were given an outline of the study project and the focus group process (Appendix 8) a few days before the focus group was held. At the beginning of the focus group meeting, the study and the group process were explained to the participants.

The first focus group involved six teachers who had all participated in the interviews a year earlier. This group showed confidence in the discussion and the conversation moved freely. A tropical downpour interrupted the discussion of the first

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focus group for 30 minutes, which made it impossible to hear or record the group. Participants had private conversations during the rain on the topic of the research, but could only be heard by the person sitting next to them. When the focus group began again after the rain, participants shared some of what they had discussed. This focus group discussed a range of topics concerning the experience of English in their school, where almost all of the students were from a Traditional language background. The second focus group consisted of five teachers who had not participated in the interview phase. These participants were confident in expressing their own views but took a little while to begin responding and interacting with each other. The questions and interview references given during these focus groups are in Appendix 8.

The Australian focus groups were not given the same quotes for discussion as the PNG groups (Appendix 6). The Australian focus groups were held almost a year after the PNG focus groups; by this time the information from the PNG focus groups had been analysed, and areas needing further exploration by focus groups had been identified. This is in line with the approach of grounded theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006), in which participants' responses are analysed during data collection, and the developing understanding is used to inform further participant involvement. Those areas of developing understanding were presented to the Australian focus groups. The teachers' focus group had six members from the same school, while the Aboriginal teacher assistant group had five members from that same school. The Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group was unique in that the participants were both educators in the school and parents of the students. The teacher assistants therefore belonged to both the school community and the local community. They each had a Traditional language background, had attended school as children in their Traditional language communities, and were now educators in their school. Their background and experiences gave them a unique perspective on the English experience of students in Traditional language communities. The questions given to the Aboriginal teacher assistants' group are in Appendix 7.

The four focus groups were used not only to validate data collected during the interviews but also to elaborate on the interview information. New data on teachers'

understanding was constructed, as per grounded theory, as the participants responded and reacted to each other's statements.

4.8   Validity

This study worked to achieve the three essential requirements of validity. First, validity requires the research to actually measure the reality that it aims to measure. Second, validity requires a clear link between the findings and the questions asked. Third, validity requires that the conclusions are linked to the findings (O'Leary, 2004).

The study achieved the first validity requirement by involving the teachers who were working in Traditional language communities: this ensured the reality of teachers' understanding of their students' English experience and learning in Traditional language communities. These participants were involved through the use of the semi-structured interviews which improved validity, as the interview questions were based on the research questions (Gray, 2005). The use of a question plan during the interviews ensured that interviews focused on the research questions. As explained in Section 4.6.1, these questions were based on research sub-questions which aimed to investigate different aspects of the two research questions. While the interviews were flexible in their direction, depending on what each participant highlighted, the question plan was used to keep the participants focused on the research questions.

The second and third validity requirements protect against research bias; such bias may occur because interviews are a social encounter in which the researcher may influence the participants (Hermanns, 2005). Member checks, triangulation and critical groups were used to ensure the data collected did report the information provided by participants, and ensured there were clear and logical links between questions, findings and conclusions. *Member checks*, as defined by Stringer (2004), allowed participants to review the data collected from their interviews to determine whether the data reflected their understanding. This study utilised member checks by giving each interview participant a copy of their transcript and inviting them to make alterations. Participants who wished to edit or elaborate on what they had said were given the opportunity to have a further interview after a few days to read their transcript.

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The study used *triangulation* to confirm information gathered from the data sources (Sagor, 2005). Time and space triangulation helped confirm the data was trustworthy by involving different groups and cultures during the same time period. Time triangulation involved interviewing different groups during the same time period, while space triangulation involved interviewing people from different cultures (Cohen et al., 2002). Time triangulation was achieved by collecting data from educators with varying backgrounds. Participant backgrounds varied according to age, gender and years of teaching experience. Space triangulation was achieved by involving participants from distinctly different cultures, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in Australia and Papua New Guinea. Triangulation was further aided by using the two instruments of interviews and focus groups, as focus groups can be used for triangulation with interviews (Cohen et al., 2002). An important part of the focus group role was to confirm, or not confirm, the understanding that was developed from the interviews.

Critical groups of experienced educators were formed in Australia and Papua New Guinea to critique the data analysis. Critical groups were groups from outside the study who looked at the researcher's understanding of the data analysis and commented on whether that was consistent with their understanding. There were two critical groups in Australia, the first with three participants who had been teachers in both Australia and Papua New Guinea, and the second with three participants – two literacy education consultants and one principal. When the critical groups met they were given an outline explaining the progression from interviews and focus groups, through findings and analysis, to the understandings that emerged (Appendix 10). The PNG critical group participants were five teachers' college lecturers. All critical group participants had experience of teaching Indigenous students in Traditional language communities. The critical groups examined the key findings from the interviews and focus groups. Critical groups contributed to the process of ensuring minimal researcher bias, and helped verify the soundness and validity of the data analysis. As required by the grounded theory approach, these three essential requirements of validity helped ensure that the investigation was guided by the information participants provided, rather than by the literature review.

4.9　Data analysis and coding

The data analysis was facilitated by the development of codes, as explained in Section 4.6.2. After the final codes were determined, a description was written for each code (Schmidt, 2005) as seen in the results Chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters, the final codes were studied to identify patterns and similarities, then classifying codes were developed. These classifying codes were used to group together final codes that focused on the same research sub-question. The labelling of the classifying codes is explained in Chapter 5 (Research Question 1) and Chapter 6 (Research Question 2). The terms used in the results chapters are defined in Table 4.6. Following this is Figure 4.1, which illustrates the coding and analysis process.

Table 4.6　Terms used in the coding process

Term	Definition
Codes	Identify results references that have similar or related meanings
Pre-codes	Codes created prior to data collection based on the literature and researcher knowledge
Post-codes	Codes created during the data collection for information that does not fit into the pre-codes
Final codes	Created by merging of pre- and post-codes after the data collection was finished
Classifying codes	Grouped final codes that provide information on the same research sub-question

Step 1: Pre-codes

Pre-codes were defined based on literature review and researcher experience	Interviews were transcribed	Transcripts were coded according to pre-Codes

Step 2: Post-Codes
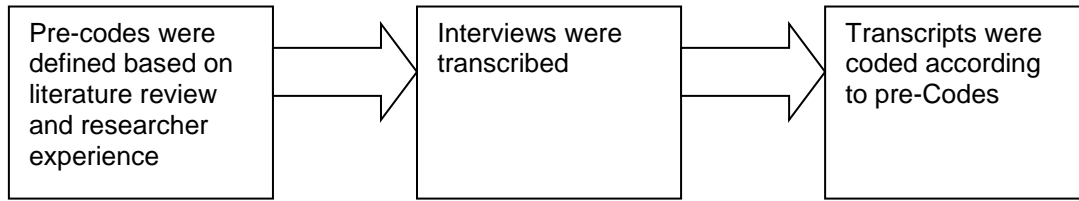
Transcripts were analysed for patterns not covered by pre-codes	Post-codes were created based on patterns	Transcripts were coded according to post-codes

Step 3: Classifying codes
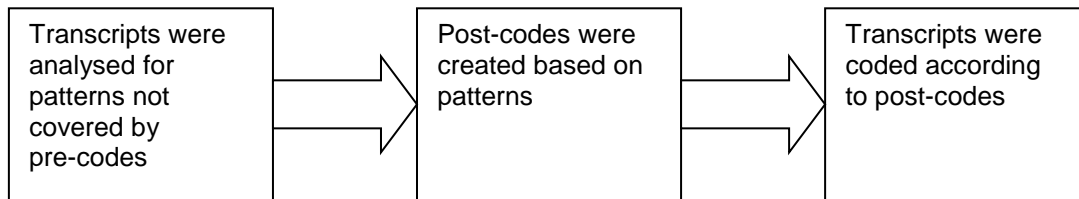
Similar pre-codes and post-codes were merged to form final codes	Codes were grouped to form classifying codes
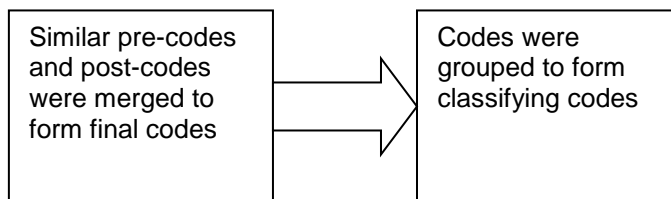
Figure 4.1   Coding process

This process of continuous development of codes and data analysis resulted in the creating of the classifying codes which, consistent with grounded theory, enabled the involvement of the participants in the inductive process to form a synthesis of teachers' understanding.

Qualitative analysis and coding in this study required transcription and continuous development of coding, as analysis continued during data collection. This process was supported by the use of NVivo 7, a qualitative analysis software package. These software packages can be used to efficiently code, organise and display text (DeNardo & Levers, 2002). Previously these tasks could only be done by hand cutting, marking and gluing text to code, and reorganising text. NVivo had an advantage over other software packages because it did not require extensive training and the researcher learned how to use it during his research (DeNardo & Levers, 2002). QSR NVivo 7 was released early in 2006 and so was available as a tool for this study. NVivo 7 is a useful program for researchers

using qualitative analysis for the first time as it includes tutorials and is linked to Microsoft Windows (Sorensen, 2008). The coding functions of NVivo 7, which aid in the coding of both open and closed questions (Sorensen, 2008), made NVivo a particularly useful tool for the coding of the semi-structured interviews in this study. NVivo 7 was efficiently used in the re-sorting and coding of both the interviews and focus groups as new codes emerged during the analysis, and was also used for the classifying of codes.

4.10   Data analysis and discussion

The classifying codes developed in the coding process were used to identify *themes* which appeared to be the basis of the results. These themes were then used to analyse and discuss the results and literature review to form *elements* for understanding (see Chapter 8). The elements were defined by their *aspects* which were derived from the final codes. Finally, the relationships between these *elements* were analysed to develop *threads* (see Chapter 9). These threads were the basis for the development of a framework to understand the extent of the English experience of students in Traditional language communities and the requirements for their successful learning in English. The terms used in the analysis and discussion are defined in Table 4.7. Following this is Figure 4.2, which illustrates the data analysis and discussion process.

Table 4.7   Terms used in the analysis and discussion phases

Term	Definition
Themes	The main ideas on which the study references are based; discerned from the classifying codes for Research Question 1
Elements	Units of understanding derived by using the themes to analyse the results and the literature
Aspects	Developed from the final codes and literature to describe the elements
Threads	Provide the basis of the framework for understanding; formed by analysing the relationships between the elements

Step 1: Data analysis and discussion (Chapter 8)

Themes were derived from the classifying codes	*Elements* were developed from an analysis and discussion of the results and literature using the themes	*Aspects* were derived from the analysis of the final codes to describe the elements
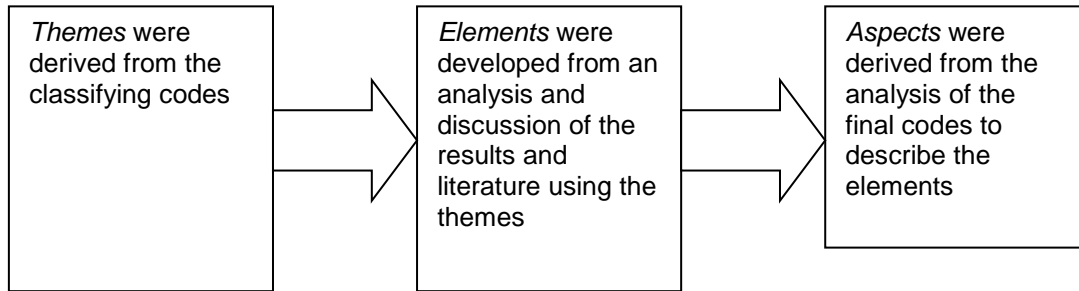
Step 2: Thread development and framework

Relationships between elements were analysed to create *threads*	Threads were used to create a framework for understanding
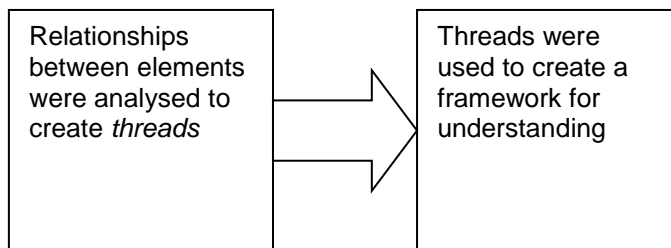
Figure 4.2   Data analysis, discussion and framework process

4.11 Organisation of the study

This study had three research phases: it moved from data collection, to the identification of codes, to the description of teachers' understanding both of the English experience and of the successful learning of students in Traditional language communities, as guided by the research questions. As noted above, the interviews identified the significant codes, which were then discussed and added to by the focus group interactions; the critical groups assisted the final validation of the significant findings of the interviews and focus groups. The three data phases – with dates, aims, research tools and analysis focus – are listed in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8   The three data phases of the study

Phase	Phase One November 2006 (Australia) April 2007 (PNG)	Phase Two April 2007 (PNG) March 2008 (Australia)	Phase Three October 2009 (PNG) November 2009 (Australia)
Aim	Identify significant codes	Explore significant codes and develop new codes	Describe teachers' understanding
Research tool	Semi-structured interviews	Focus groups	Critical groups
Analysis focus	Content	Interaction	Validation

The study's three data collection phases have already been described in Section 4.5, above. Below is a summary of the three phases.

4.11.1 Phase One: Content focus

November 2006 (Australia), April 2007 (PNG)

Phase One involved the semi-structured interviewing of seven teachers in north-west Australia and thirteen teachers in the Papua New Guinea Highlands. Interviews had a content focus and collected data on the research questions; this data was then analysed using pre-codes and creating post-codes for unanticipated information.

4.11.2 Phase Two: Interaction focus

April 2007 (PNG), March 2008 (Australia)

The significant codes that were identified during the interviews were used as quotes for the focus groups. The focus group interaction explored the significant facets of understanding raised during the interviews. The synergy of the participants' interaction often created new ideas, so new codes were generated by their interaction. The focus groups were held in some of the schools in which interviews took place.

4.11.3 Phase Three: Validation focus

October 2009 (PNG), November 2009 (Australia)

Critical groups in both regions met to consider the main findings of the data analysis. These critical groups had a validation focus, as explained in Section 4.8, as they considered how the main findings related to the research questions.

4.12 Controls

The controls used in this study have been described earlier this chapter. These included study processes (Section 4.3), interview question guides and question techniques (Section 4.6) and validity (Section 4.8). The entire study process was based on grounded theory (Section 4.2) to ensure that participants were actively involved in the development of teachers' understanding of the English experience and essential requirements of successful learning for students living in Traditional language communities.

4.13 Limitations

The researcher has been involved in the education of Indigenous students for twenty years. This background was a strength in the research process because it helped the researcher understand the nature of the issues that arose. However, it was also a potential source of weakness: as a highly interested party, the researcher had formed his own understanding of the topic and issues at stake. The controls already outlined were put in place.

Participants involved in this study were limited to two specific areas of Australia and Papua New Guinea. The findings of this study apply to these areas and those participants involved in this study. Teachers and their understandings are not the only sources of information on the English experience and learning of students in Traditional language communities. The students themselves, and their families, would have

significant insights as well. The most significant delimitation of this study is that it concentrated on the educators' understandings and did not include the understandings of present and past students and their families.

4.14 Ethical considerations

This study followed research ethics with the prime consideration that participants were not harmed in any way (Gray, 2005). The wellbeing of the participants was ensured by the principles of confidentiality, permission and informed consent (Stringer, 2004). *Confidentiality* was essential for this study as participants shared a significant area of their professional life. Many teachers consider their work a vocation, so great care was taken to ensure that the teachers quoted in the study would not be able to be identified. Furthermore, as teachers from only a few schools were involved, care was taken to ensure that the schools involved could not be identified.

Permission was obtained from the schools involved in the study and the relevant education offices. Most of the research was carried out in schools in Indigenous communities and involved Indigenous teachers, therefore the ethics procedures for research in Indigenous communities were followed. The guidelines followed include those outlined by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and ACU's Indigenous Research Advisory Group. These guidelines are based on the six values of spirit and integrity, reciprocity, respect, equality, survival and protection, and responsibility (National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC], 2003).

Permission and ethics approval was received from ACU's Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC). An ethics clearance application was also presented to the university's Indigenous Support Unit for comment and advice prior to its consideration by HREC.

Research approval for research in Papua New Guinea was received from the National Research Institute of Papua New Guinea, which is the country's overall research authority. Their research guidelines, which were followed, include the important

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consideration that the research benefits the participants in the study. Permission was also received from the government of the area in which the research took place.

Informed consent was achieved by alerting each participant to his or her rights during the interview. These rights included the right to terminate the interview and to withdraw permission for any comments to be recorded. In particular, care was taken to ensure that no Indigenous participant felt any obligation to participate, and that consent was freely given.

As a researcher also has a duty of care towards participants in a study (Knobel & Lankshear, 1999), the researcher strove to make participants aware of the importance of their contribution, and ensured that participants understood that their comments were valued and affirmed.

4.15 Study timeline

The study timeline was divided into six sections: research preparation, interviews, focus groups, critical groups and thesis writing. These sections are listed in Tables 4.9 to 4.13.

Table 4.9   Research preparation timeline

Proposal presentation	July 2006
Application to the National Research Institute of Papua New Guinea Ethics submission	August 2006
Preparation of interview questions and selection of pre-codes	August–September 2006
Interview questions trial	October 2006

Table 4.10 Interview timeline

Interviews: Australia	November 2006
Interview transcribing Authentication of transcripts by interviewed teachers	November 2006
Further literature research	March 2007
Interviews: Papua New Guinea	March 2007
Interview transcribing Authentication of transcripts by interviewed teachers	March 2007
Analysis of pre-codes and post-codes	April 2007
Coding and analysis of data Identification of post-codes	July 2007 – December 2008

Table 4.11 Focus groups timeline

Papua New Guinea focus groups	April 2008
Focus group transcribing and coding	May–September 2008
ACU progress presentation	October 2008
Australian focus groups	March 2009
Focus group analysis	April–May 2009

Table 4.12 Critical groups timeline

Preparation of analysis for presentation to critical groups	June–August 2009
Australian critical groups	September 2009
Papua New Guinea critical groups	October 2009
Critical group analysis	November 2009

Table 4.13 Thesis writing timeline

Thesis writing	December 2009 – July 2010
Submission of first draft sections to supervisors	July 2010
Revision of drafts	July 2010 – January 2013
Submission of thesis	March 2013

* * *

This methodology, based on grounded theory, guided the data collection and analysis so that the focus remained on the research questions. The use of interviews, focus groups and critical groups, then the subsequent analysis and coding using NVivo software, provided information for the results, discussion and implications chapters. The complexity science principles, and validity strategies and controls, safeguarded the quality of the data gathered, while ethical standards protected the wellbeing of the participants. This methodology gave direction and structure to the study, so that teachers' understanding of the extent of the English experience of students living in Traditional language communities, and the essential requirements for their successful learning, could be investigated. The results of this investigation into the three phases of data collection will now be presented in the next three chapters.

5 Results for Research Question 1: Teachers' understanding of English environment experience

The case study approach used in this research enhanced the investigation of the research questions, as it enabled teachers' understanding to be investigated in the Traditional language communities where teachers are living and working; that is, in the context in which they form their understanding. As noted in Chapter 4, the research design used interviews, focus groups and critical groups that allowed a range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers to be involved, and allowed their responses to be cross-checked. This approach was well-suited to a high level of involvement by participants, as individuals and in groups. Indigenous teachers especially showed an inclination for involvement in the group interaction of the focus and critical groups. The teachers were enthusiastic about the research process as the topic is very important to them. The results reveal that the case study approach has provided a rich source of data about teachers' understanding of the English experience of Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities and the essential requirements for successful student learning.

The results chapters present the results of the interview, focus group and critical group data phases that investigated the two research questions of this study. Chapter 5 presents the results for Research Question 1 – teacher understanding of the extent of the English environment experienced by Indigenous Traditional language students. Chapter 6 reports on the results of the same data phases that investigated Research Question 2 – the essential requirements for successful learning. Chapter 7 provides a collation and further consideration of the results of the three data phases for both research questions.

5.1 Research Question 1 and sub-questions

The investigation of Research Question 1 – 'What do teachers understand is the extent of the English environment that their Indigenous Traditional language students experience?' – was guided by three sub-questions (see below). As explained in Chapter 4 (Sections 4.6.2 and 4.9), data from the research was then coded using pre-codes, post-codes and

final codes. All of these codes were grouped according to the relevant sub-questions. These final code groups can now be given classifying codes to identify the research sub-question to which they are related. The labelling of the classifying codes is shown below.

1a.   What do teachers identify as their students' <u>opportunities</u> to experience English? (coded as *English opportunities*)

1b.   What do teachers evaluate as the <u>benefits</u> of their students learning in English? (coded as *English benefits*)

1c.   What do teachers assess as the <u>contrast</u> between school learning and community learning? (coded as *Learning contrast*)

Each classifying code is labelled according to the focus of the sub-question, which is underlined. The results of each data collection phase for Research Question 1 are presented by describing the final codes for each classifying code. The interview data phases had a *content focus* in order to gather information for each of the research sub-questions. The focus group phase had an *interaction focus* to confirm the interview references and to generate new ideas. The critical group phase had a *validation focus* to validate the main points derived from the first two phases.

In this chapter, the interview results are presented first, as interviews were the primary source of information; the elaborations and additions from the focus groups are presented second. Finally, the critical groups' validations are presented. Throughout this thesis study participants are referred to as 'teachers', as the majority of the study participants were teachers (75 per cent) or former teachers working as academics or education consultants (15 per cent). The remaining participants were Aboriginal teacher assistants (10 per cent).

5.2   Interview results

The research sub-questions' classifying codes – *English opportunities*, *English benefits* and *Learning contrast* grouped the final codes that contained teachers' references to their understanding of the extent of the English environment. Throughout this chapter, the

importance of each classifying or final code is shown in two ways. First, the percentage of teachers who made a reference to a code is displayed in a bar graph; this shows the percentage of teachers whose understanding included each particular code. Second, a pie graph shows the total percentage of references within each code, which gauges whether the references made by teachers were brief or extensive for that code. The first of these graphs is in Figure 5.1, below.

Percentage of teachers whose references focused on these classifying codes

Proportion of references to these classifying codes made by teachers
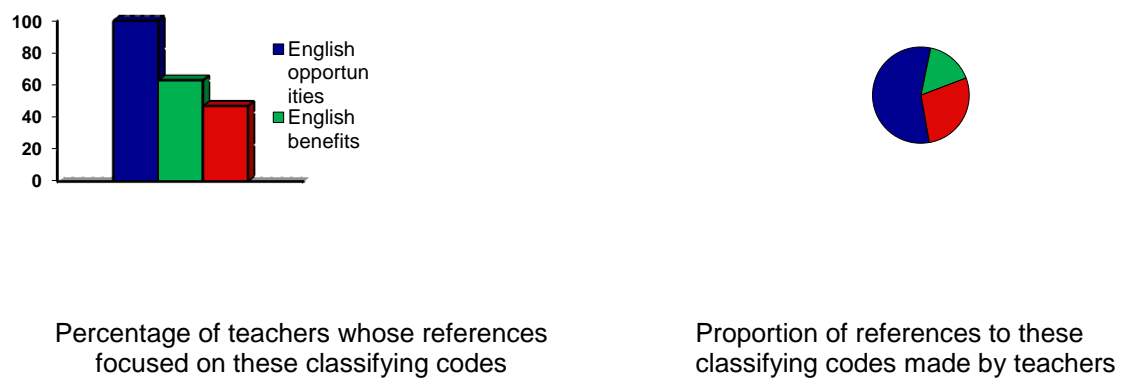
Figure 5.1   Comparison of references made to *English opportunities*, *English benefits* and *Learning contrast* classifying codes during interviews

A comparison of the two graphs indicates that teachers' references to their students' English environment experience were predominantly focused on the *English opportunities* final code, in terms of both participant involvement and references made. Not only did all teachers refer to *English opportunities*, as shown in the bar graph, but the pie graph shows that *English opportunities* provided more than half of the total references for Research Question 1. Thus the graphs' different perspectives together indicate the 'weight' of this code in teachers' understanding of the extent of the English environment in their Traditional language students' experience.

The *Learning contrast* code was the second most important part of teachers' references, included in just over a quarter of the references and referred to by almost 50 per cent of teachers. This result shows that *Learning contrast* references were a substantial part of the understanding of students' English environment experience for a large number of teachers interviewed, and that a noteworthy number of references were attributed to this code. *English benefits* had the least number of references, but many

teachers did mention it: over 60 per cent of teachers included this as an important consideration.

Within each of these classifying codes, data emerged that offered insights into how teachers understand each topic. These data will now be presented in the following sections.

5.2.1 *English opportunities*

The results that apply to Research Question 1, sub-question 1a – 'What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English? – are presented in this section. The classifying code *English opportunities* groups the final codes that contain references in which teachers both describe the opportunities their students have to experience English and the limits to those opportunities. The final codes grouped as *English opportunities* were: 'English exposure', 'Traditional language' and 'Student comparison'.

The 'English exposure' final code gathers teachers' references on the limited possibilities for their students to be exposed to English in their daily lives. The 'Traditional language' final code describes the predominance of Traditional language in the students' language environment, while the 'Student comparison' final code contains teachers' comparisons of the English experience of their students with a Traditional language background to the English experience of Indigenous students living in urban areas. The graphs in Figure 5.2 show the total occurrences of these three final codes in terms of participant percentages (bar graph) and reference totals (pie graph).
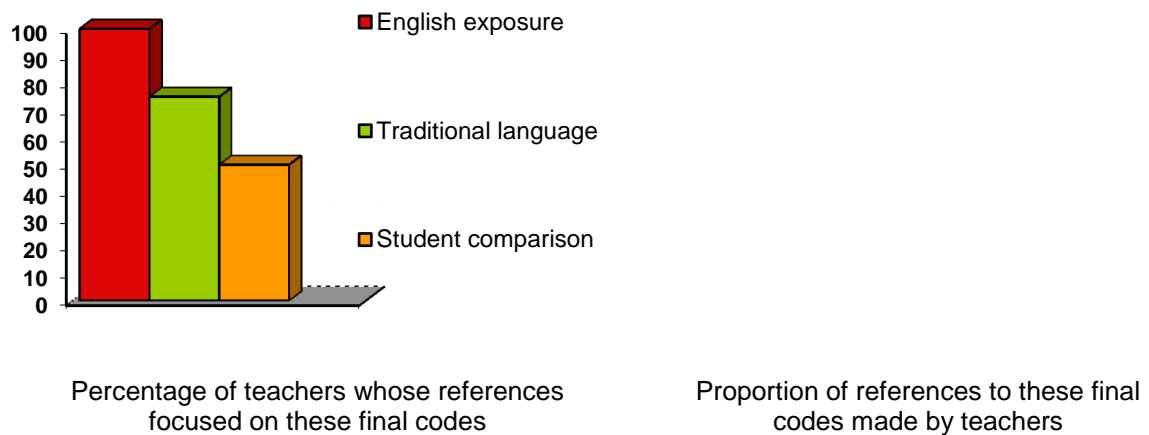
Figure 5.2   *English opportunities*: Comparison of references made to final codes in interviews

The 'English exposure' final code included references from all teachers and provided more than half of all the *English opportunities* references. This means that 'English exposure' was the single most important final code in all references made by teachers during the interviews on teachers' understanding of students' experience of the English environment. The 'Traditional language' final code references were also important; not only did more than 70 per cent of teachers make 'Traditional language' references, but also these references made up one-third of all references. 'Student comparison' was mentioned by 50 per cent of teachers but comprised only 16 per cent of the total references. The next sections will detail the nature of these references for these final codes in order of their importance as shown in these results.

5.2.1.1 English exposure

The first final code, 'English exposure', consists of teachers' references to the possibilities for students to interact with English in their daily lives. All teachers interviewed both taught and lived in Indigenous communities. They described their understanding of 'English exposure' in terms of English exposure in the school and in the community, and through their observations of the proximity of English to their students. Table 5.1 presents a summary of their references to the 'English exposure' final code. The first column shows the main points derived from the references, while the second column presents evidence in the form of a selection of teachers' comments on their students'

exposure to English. The references selected are representative of all the teachers'
comments and highlight their understanding of the limited exposure their students have
to English.

Table 5.1   Summary of interview references to the 'English exposure' final code

Final code main points	References
In school 1. Used when students are speaking to the teacher.	1. Marcia (Australia): For the few hours they are at school and even though we try to introduce and encourage students to respond in English, when they're at school, the level of children that I'm teaching, it is quite difficult for them. They do try to as much as they can, answer me in as much English as they can, but when they talk to each other they just automatically revert to their native first language.
2. Occasionally used when speaking to their peers in class and rarely used out of class.	2. Pota (PNG): When I was around they were able to at least try their very best in English. Otherwise when I am not, just out of the classroom, they could hardly speak in English, they just went on speaking language. Every word they speak, everything they say is just language when there is nobody around.
3. Students only use small phrases and simple sentences.	3a. Greg (Australia): They learn what I like to call 'survival English'. They know small phrases and terms of phrases and words, which are quite common and which they need to use and that's all the English they see they need to employ. 3b. Rachael (PNG): At times they are not confident to speak to us in English. That's one. When they give us answers they give an answer in one word or two. They don't give a full sentence in English so mostly they speak their own vernacular or Pidgin at times.
Proximity 4. Students are alienated from English.	4. Greg (Australia): Kids are alienated from the English-speaking world.
5. English is distant and far.	5a. Marcia (Australia): Well, they're very distant, I would think, they're just not in an English- speaking environment. 5b. Rachael (PNG): I think it [English-speaking environment] is far or distant. Because the area where the students live and come from to school, they don't have a lot of English-speaking people. When they are with the people in their daily lives, they don't speak English.
6. English is an isolated and foreign language.	6. Raphael (PNG): English was new to them, a foreign language … In terms of education the isolated language would be English.

7. English-speaking environment is too far.	7. Veronica (PNG): For my students there is no close English-speaking environment. It is too far. I believe it is – especially around in town areas – it is possible for an English-speaking environment but not here in my school.
In the community 8. English is rarely heard.	8. Marcia (Australia): As far as I can tell outside of school there is very little opportunity for these children to hear English. Perhaps a bit on television and video but that would be all.
9. Very few opportunities to speak with English speakers.	9a. Gracie (Australia): When they go to the store and they want to buy something or they are interacting with the shopkeeper or whoever is taking the money. If they see us teachers … and they say hello or decide to talk to you, they will use English. Around us more than anything else. 9b. Pota (PNG): In any daily communications they go out of the school or even out to the village no one speaks to them [in English], even in Pidgin which is their second language they all speak in dialect [Traditional language].
10. Minimal evidence of written texts.	10. Tapi (PNG): When they are not at school in our case many students don't speak English back in the village when they go back home. … Sometimes when they go to town they read notices on shop windows, by hearing from TV or they can read simple English in newspapers, but not often. Rarely they can read or speak English.

These references for English exposure are representative of all the teachers' comments, and these results show that evidence of students being exposed to an English environment in their communities is sparse. References 8–10 reveal that these teachers observed only a few instances in which their students heard, saw or used English in their community lives. Even in their own classes and schoolyards, teachers observed limited English exposure for their students. Teachers asserted that they encouraged students to use English when at school, especially in the classroom. However, all teachers observed that English was rarely used in the playground and English was only used when students were speaking directly with their teachers. In references 1–3, teachers report the minimal evidence of English exposure at school. In references 4–7, when teachers were asked about the immediacy of English to the lives of their students, they used the words 'alienated', 'distant', 'far', 'new', 'foreign' and 'isolated' to describe the proximity of English to their students. These word choices emphasise how the daily lives of students are not conducive to any exposure to English, and all noted the lack of English use in the students' environment.

5.2.1.2   Traditional language

The second final code, 'Traditional language', highlighted participant responses to the research sub-question which asked them to describe their students' opportunities to experience English. Teachers reported their observations on the prevalence of the Traditional language in the school and community language environments. Teachers also commented on the importance of the Traditional language in the lives of their students. Table 5.2 contains typical references by teachers about the wide use of the Traditional language at school. Again, the first column lists the main points derived from the references, while the second column provides a selection of those references as evidence for the points.

Table 5.2   Summary of interview references to the 'Traditional language' final code

Final code main points	References
In the school	
1. Students mainly use their Traditional language with their peers in and out of class.	1a. Veronica (PNG): Most of the time in the school they use their own mother tongue. Less times they use Pidgin [Creole]. 1b. Malbola (PNG): Only in school we teachers encourage them to speak English, but most times they don't. Most of the school hours they speak their own language. 1c. Gracie (Australia): When they talk among themselves even in class they do not speak English unless you ask them to. You see it in the class and outside you see them speaking in their home language as well.
2. The only time students do not use their Traditional language at school is when speaking to their teachers.	2. Catherine (Australia): When they are talking amongst themselves they are speaking in Traditional. If they answer a question to me it will be in English. If they ask a question it will be in English. When they have to do any group work or team work they will speak in [their] language.
3. The use of Traditional language at school reduces the effectiveness of English learning at school.	3. Smith (PNG): When you compare the amount of time they spend in the classroom with the amount of time they spend outside using the dialect [Traditional language] communicating with each other [teachers and students], trying to build a relationship, it really draws the kids away from what has been learnt.

In the community	
4. Students mostly use their Traditional language in community.	4a. Veronica (PNG): At home they use their own mother tongue most of the time. When they come across other people from other provinces that don't speak their own language they use Pidgin.
	4b. Malbola (PNG): Most of the time, when students are at home they use their vernacular.
5. When not using their Traditional language, students occasionally use a Creole or an English dialect when speaking with other Indigenous people.	5. Gracie (Australia): I'd say Traditional language … Maybe a little bit of Aboriginal English as well. But definitely not Australian Standard English.
Importance of Traditional language	
6. Traditional language belongs to them and their home.	6. Raphael (PNG): It [Traditional language] is the language that belongs to them and belongs to their home and when they speak the language, they are at home with who they are and what they communicate.
7. Traditional Language is their natural language for understanding.	7. Ruth (Australia): In this environment they are all speaking [the local Traditional language] so in that sense it's very different. Because they are speaking [the Traditional language] at home, they do speak [the Traditional language] at home because it's their natural language, which they click into to understand and try to be understood by each other.

The results show that teachers maintained that the Traditional language dominated the language environment at school (reference 1a) and in the community (references 6–7). Even in the classroom, where teachers had the greatest control over the use of language, teachers reported that students extensively used the Traditional language, which most teachers did not understand (references 1c, 2). Teachers stated that their students chose to speak English only when they were directed and monitored by their teachers. In group learning activities, teachers revealed that their students used Traditional language unless closely supervised by their teachers (reference 2). Overall, teachers reported a very high incidence of the use of students' Traditional language at school for communication, and its extensive use during learning when students were not in direct contact with their teachers.

In their students' community learning environment, teachers identified the almost exclusive use of Traditional language by their students. When students had occasional contact with people who did not speak their Traditional language, an English dialect or

Creole was used rather than English (reference 4a). In Australia the English dialect, Aboriginal English (reference 5), was named; in Papua New Guinea it was the Creole, Tok Pisin. The importance of the Traditional language is clearly expressed by Raphael and Ruth (references 6, 7) in Table 5.2: it is the language that links students to their place. Teachers judged that the dominance of the Traditional language in the students' language environment left little room for opportunities to experience English.

5.2.1.3 Student comparison

During the interviews, teachers were asked to compare the English opportunities of their students living in Traditional language communities to those of Indigenous students who lived in urban areas. This comparison was another means for teachers to assess the level of English opportunities for their students. Teachers who compared urban Indigenous students with their current students had previously taught urban Indigenous students in urban areas, or they had Indigenous students from urban areas in their class. These Indigenous students from urban areas did not speak a Traditional language as their vernacular but spoke either Aboriginal English (Australia) or the Creole, Tok Pisin (PNG). Table 5.3 contains the main points and references comparing English opportunities in community and school for Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities and for Indigenous students living in urban areas.

Table 5.3   Summary of interview references to the 'Student comparison' final code

Final code main points	References
In the school 1. Urban students show higher literacy skills in school.	1a. Marco (Australia): Their [urban students'] use of English as a language, their ability to speak and create sentences, converse is at a higher level, completely. The ability to write, to read and to converse and convey what they're thinking is by far a lot higher. 1b. Greg (Australia): Certainly the students who have come from town schools have increased skills when it comes to literacy and numeracy.

In the community	
2. Urban students are more likely to have family who use English.	2. Tapi (PNG): It was easy for students in urban schools to cope up with English because many of the parents were educated and they lived in town. So they had opportunities to read papers and can hear people speak English.
3. Urban students have more access to reading materials and English users.	3. Kuringi (PNG): I found out that children who were from remote schools couldn't grasp things quickly but those who were from town schools could get things quickly. [This is] because of books or newspapers or any educational things … they can get access to them [more] than the others who are from the remote schools.

Teachers reported that Indigenous students living in urban areas have a higher level of English literacy skills than students from Traditional language communities (reference 1). The urban students not only were more likely to hear English being used, but they also had more access to written materials such as books and newspapers (reference 2). Teachers concluded that these greater English opportunities resulted in urban Indigenous students enjoying more learning success in English in class compared to Indigenous students from Traditional language communities (reference 3).

5.2.1.4   *English opportunities*: Results summary

The relative importance of each of these final codes in forming teachers' understanding of English opportunities is shown in Figure 5.3. Each portion of the pie graph shows the contribution of a specific final code in relation to the total number of references for Research Question 1. A summary of pertinent comments is presented with each sub-code.

'Traditional language'
- Used extensively in the community
- Some Creole or English dialect
- Used in class with peers
- Used often outside of class at school

'Student comparison'
- Urban Indigenous students had English interaction
- Higher literacy skills

Other Research Question 1 references

'English exposure'
- English rarely used in community, oral or written
- Used in class with teachers, not peers
- English far and isolated

Figure 5.3   *English opportunities* references as part of all references to Research Question 1

The *English opportunities* classifying code provided more than half of all references on Research Question 1: it is a rich source of information on teachers' understanding of the English environment experienced by students living in Traditional language communities. 'English exposure' shows that teachers' understanding is mainly formed by their observation of their students' limited exposure to English. 'Traditional language', with the second highest number of references, revealed the dominance of the Traditional language, leaving few opportunities for English. 'Student comparison', despite having least references, revealed that the English opportunities of students living in Traditional language communities are fewer than the urban students' opportunities to experience English.

The following section presents the results of the second sub-question's focus.

5.2.2 English benefits

This section presents the results from Research Question 1, sub-question 1b – 'What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English?' – coded as *English benefits.* During the interviews teachers were asked the question in a neutral way so as not to infer a positive or negative understanding of benefits. In this way teachers were given no direction as to whether they should identify potential benefits or limitations to benefits. However, as with *English opportunities*, teachers predominantly identified the limitations to achieving benefits rather than the potential benefits. Teachers reported their identification of benefits from using English in the community, school and in the future, and the limitations to these benefits. Similar numbers of references were put into each final code that was classified as *English benefits.* These final codes for *English benefits* are 'School benefits', 'Community benefits' and 'Future benefits'. The results show that, for each final code, there were references that describe potential benefits and limitations to benefits. The results are outlined below, with the relevant references grouped together in the tables that follow.

5.2.2.1 School benefits

The 'School benefits' final code contains teachers' responses that referred to the benefits their students may achieve from the use of English in learning at school. In their references, teachers not only identified benefits but also identified limitations to those benefits. A selection of references which express an understanding of these benefits are listed in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4   Summary of interview references to the 'School benefits' final code

Final code main points	References
In the school **Potential**	
1. Reading and writing at school.	1a. Rachael (PNG): During his free time I see him reading books because we've been encouraging students to read more books.
	1b. Veronica (PNG): I tell them that reading is the key to understanding English.
2. Learning subjects through English.	2. Pota (PNG): Telling them you have to learn in English because everything as you go through your education you always learn and write in English so I have to try to motivate them to speak English.
3. All learning materials are in English.	3. Tapi (PNG): All materials for learning are written in English and we want you to speak English and we try our best to speak English.
Limitations	
4. Fear and shame of making mistakes in English.	4. Tapi (PNG): Yes, some students who don't understand the English language and cannot cope with reading, and speaking English properly. They feel shy of themselves being the lowest. They feel down and drop out of primary school. … When a child always gives the wrong answer, other students in the class they may be talking about the child's mistakes. They feel that 'Maybe I am not a good learner so I better go away'.
5a. Limited time at school. 5b. Holidays are disruptions to learning.	5. Ilikas (PNG): Students are not consistent with English – then you find that after they go for holidays and they come back they will still have problems in English, especially in writing. Like it is not consistent. It is like you are repeating the same ideas again. It is like every year you are beginning a new thing again. A new lot of teaching English again.
6. It is tiring for students to learn in a language that is not theirs.	6. Gracie (Australia): I think it challenges the kids. Most of the people that go to school in education like this are taught in their native tongue and that makes it a whole lot easier. But maybe that's why they switch off a lot of the time. Maybe it's hard work for the brains to go for three hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. Maybe it is quite tiring.

'School benefits' includes references that noted that English enabled students to learn about different subjects (references 2, 3). Traditional languages had minimal, if any, written texts so English texts gave students the opportunity to learn through reading and writing (references 1a, 1b). This allowed students to benefit from using English to read. However, at school, teachers also identified limitations to their students enjoying the benefits of English. In particular, teachers observed their students were disinclined to use English because of their fear and shame of making mistakes in English in front of their

peers (reference 4). Holidays were also seen as disrupting the benefits of English; during the holidays, students were seen to have minimal interaction with English and therefore the progress they had made in English prior to the holidays was lost (reference 5). Added to these limits to school benefits was the belief that it took effort for students to learn in a language that was not theirs, and that this was tiring for students (reference 6). Overall, although teachers were asked to describe the benefits of using English, the 'School benefits' references show an understanding by teachers that there are obstacles to students achieving those benefits.

5.2.2.2 Community benefits

The 'Community benefits' final code includes references that teachers made as they described the potential benefits for students using English in their daily lives away from school. In their descriptions of benefits, teachers not only identified benefits of using English in the community but also identified impediments to students realising those benefits. The main points made by teachers in the final code 'Community benefits', and references that are representative of those points, are listed in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Summary of interview references to the 'Community benefits' final code

Final code main points	References
In the community **Potential**	
1. Using English when shopping.	1. Marcia (Australia): Well they need it simply because in order to manage, even in this community, they have to be able to read labels and know how to work the ATM machine.
2. Reading labels and signs.	2. Ben (Australia): They probably see it [English] at the store, they would see it at the clinic, when they go to some of the teachers' houses they would see it there, they would go to the community office, they would probably see it there. They would see it on the power house, they would see safety signs, and at the fuel bowsers.
3a. Speaking to visitors and teachers. 3b. TV and newspapers.	3. Rachael (PNG): There are times when [there] are visitors like foreigners, especially when they come around, they use English. They watch TV programs like the news in English. At other times they read newspapers of interest.

Limitations	
4. Few opportunities to use English in the community.	4. Pota (PNG): Because most of them come from very remote areas where even the parents do not understand English and almost 100 per cent of the population do not speak English, so they feel that it is no use learning English at school. After all, whom am I – they – going to communicate with?
5. Minimal or no reading materials at home.	5. Marcia (Australia): And as for writing – they would very rarely see an adult writing so they probably don't understand –'Why do I need to?'
6. English has limited useful applications in community life.	6a. John (PNG): The only thing that they learn during Grade 8 [last year of primary school] is things that couldn't help them when they go home – so I believe it doesn't help the kid when he or she goes back home.
	6b. Greg (Australia): All of their families speak the Traditional language. They don't need to read or write. They need it in a sense that it will help improve lifestyle but they don't need it in a sense that they can still survive without it.

In the 'Community benefits' references, teachers identified practical benefits of using English including using English while shopping, reading labels and signs, speaking to the occasional English visitor, watching TV and reading newspapers (references 1, 2, 3). However, overall, teachers noted that students in Traditional language communities were afforded very few opportunities to benefit from using English due to the difficulty they had in finding people in their communities willing and able to speak English with them (reference 4). Some teachers even questioned whether English would have any useful application in the community lives of their students (references 6a, 6b).

5.2.2.3 Future benefits

Teachers often mentioned that the compelling reason for learning in English was the benefits that may be achieved by their students in the future after finishing primary school. These references are included in the final code 'Future benefits'. However, this final code also contains references in which teachers question whether these future benefits are realisable. Table 5.6 provides the main points made by these references, and some of the references from which these points are derived.

Table 5.6   Summary of interview references to the 'Future benefits' final code

Final code main points	References
In the future	
1. To gain a better standard of living.	1. Greg (Australia): I guess people need to have instilled in them a knowledge that reading and writing, okay, you don't need it to survive, but you do need it to achieve and you do need it to pull yourself out of everyday poverty and you do need it to immerse yourself and connect yourself to the wider world.
2. Enabling engagement in the wider community.	2. Raphael (PNG): In the minds of the students the fact that they would know English and communicate in English would be bringing the world closer to them.
3a. Writing letters. 3b. Being informed about news.	3. Tapi (PNG): In the cases where there is nobody in the community who knows how to speak English or write English, a school leaver can speak or write on behalf of the community. He can write letters to the various groups to get aid to get projects into the community. By listening to news about the happenings in other places and tell the people the happenings. Read notices and labels on medicines to help the people.
4. Employment and further education.	4. Kund (PNG): Because when the kids are able to move up the steps, like when they complete Grade 8 successfully they will go up to Grade 9. As they go higher the steps they will take English as the only medium of communication. If they go to universities and if they become employed somewhere they will use it [English] at once.
Limitations	
5. Limited further education opportunities or productive uses of English.	5a. Raphael (PNG): In [a remote PNG village school] they are just so isolated; they are in the bush in the middle of nowhere, in the mountains among big trees and rivers. So education – I go to school and I pass the exams – what do I do? I come back here and make gardens in my little place where I live.
	5b. Marco (Australia): I don't really see a huge incentive for students to actually speak English outside of school. Their family, their friends, everyone they know speak the Traditional language on the most part and speaking English, there's no real need to learn at a higher level because there is not a huge amount of employment.
	5c. Kund (PNG): Now the ones coming to school and going back [to village life] after Grade 8, the fact is that their other friends, their peers are in the village and they are adapting to the village lifestyle. They are wasting these eight years in the classroom. When they go back after Grade 8 to the villages they will find life a little bit challenging. The ones that are in the village have already adapted to the lifestyle. When they go home they will try to look into the ways that their other friends have developed and are using. So this is what I meant.

'Future benefits' references include teachers' responses that promote English as the vehicle for further education, employment and status – benefits that would enable

students to engage in the wider community outside of their local communities (references 1, 2, 4). Students may also be able to help people in their community who cannot read and write (reference 3). Some teachers saw the future benefits of English as the most important benefits that could be achieved through English. However, 'Future benefits' also includes references in which teachers questioned whether these future benefits would be achieved. Some saw that there was a lack of employment opportunities and predicted a continuing lack for the students in the future. This lack of employment was seen to be especially acute if students wished to remain living in their Traditional language communities (references 5a, 5b). One participant, Kund, even wonders if the students who did not go to school were better off than those who did go to school (reference 5c).

5.2.2.4 *English benefits*: Results summary

In summary, the results for the *English benefits* classifying code – as expressed through the references to the final codes 'School benefits', 'Community benefits' and 'Future benefits' – indicate that although teachers were able to identify ways in which English could be beneficial for their students from Traditional language communities, they expressed an awareness of perceived obstacles and challenges their students faced in realising these benefits. While a similar number of teachers identified actual benefits and limitations within the *English benefits* references, there are more limitation references than benefit references. As Table 5.7 details, and Figure 5.4 illustrates, teachers found it easier to identify limitations than actual achievable benefits.

Table 5.7   Interview references identifying potential English benefits and limitations

	No. of teachers /20	No. of references
Total	15	27
English benefits	8	11
Benefit limitations	9	16
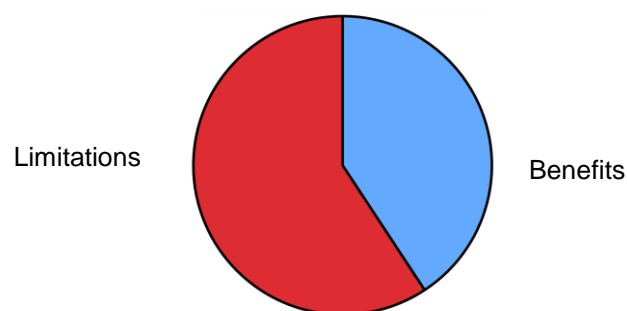
Figure 5.4   Percentage of references identifying potential English benefits and limitations

The results of the *English benefits* references show these teachers' understanding that their students living in Traditional language communities experience an English environment that provides some potential benefits, but that students are hindered in achieving those benefits in their schools, communities and futures.

The following section presents the results of the focus of the third sub-question in the investigation of the English experience of students in Traditional language communities.

5.2.3 *Learning contrast*

This section describes the results for Research Question 1, sub-question 1c: 'What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning?' The classifying code groups the final codes 'Learning activities' and 'Home support', which contain teachers' references to the contrast of the two learning environments. 'Learning

activities' contrasts the learning roles and activities of students at school and in the community. 'Home support' contrasts teachers' expectations of home learning with the reality of students' home learning situations.

5.2.3.1 Learning activities

In their 'Learning activities' references, teachers described their understanding of their class learning environment and their knowledge of their students' home learning environment, and found a number of contrasts. References that are representative of the 'Learning activities' final code are presented in Table 5.8, accompanied by the main points derived from these references.

Table 5.8 Summary of interview references to the 'Learning activities' final code

Final code main points	References
Learning activities at school	
1a. Formal school learning. 1b. Controlled learning.	1. Rachael (PNG): Informal learning when students go around, they learn at their own pace, they see things happening around, they kind of put them into there and they go around learning. Formal learning in the classroom, it's kind of controlled. Students go by sequence, they go by steps.
2a. Sitting down and listening. 2b. Teacher-directed.	2. Ruth (Australia): I suppose the school learning is very much sit down and listen to an English-speaking person.
3. Students find it difficult to adapt to school learning.	3. Raphael (PNG): Every time I was teaching them in class I did not feel they were understanding … they were little ones so this was the first time they were coming together as a group, so that made it difficult for them and me. Because getting together was a factor. First time in class.
Learning activities in the community	
4. Informal learning.	4. Ben (Australia): At home they sort of sit around the campfire and talk. It's a lot more informal, I think, at home.
5a. Shared learning. 5b. Child-directed learning. 5c. Group learning with peers. 5d. Discovery learning. 5e. Independent learning.	5. Ruth (Australia): At home it is very much a shared context – the learning is done in a shared way and there's a lot more, the kids have independence – they're pretty much out there learning on their own. A lot of learning help happens independent of adults in the community at home. It's more of a discovery, they go, wander around in groups together, and find things and discover in that journey with a peer group rather than adult-directed.

6. Learning through stories.	6. Marco (Australia): I think obviously we're looking at a culture that didn't really write things down until recently so their way of learning is through stories, through looking at the land and listening to family members, a kind of an oral learning, a visual learning which is different to western learning. It's completely different.

'Learning activities' contains teacher references on the formal school learning that is experienced by the students in contrast to the informal learning they experience in their community. Community learning was described as being mainly directed by students themselves learning through discovery (reference 5) and listening to stories (reference 6). Conversely, classroom learning was seen as more controlled by the teacher (reference 1); rather than utilising the visual and active style of community learning, it was seen to involve sitting and listening (reference 2). Informal community learning is seen as completely different from school learning (reference 4). As Raphael reflects in Table 5.8 (reference 3), new, young students find it difficult to adapt to the school learning environment.

5.2.3.2 Home support

The 'Home support' final code describes teachers' expectations of the necessary home learning environment to support successful learning at school. Teachers also contrast this supportive home learning environment with the reality of their students' home lives. Table 5.9 gives a selection of teachers' references and the main points derived from these references.

Table 5.9   Summary of interview references to the 'Home support' final code

Final code main points	References
Home support expectations	
1. Family supporting the school's goals and aims.	1. Greg (Australia): You need parents and a home life which complements the school's goals and aims.
2. Educated parents.	2. Mary (PNG): The home develops the child. If he has educated parents he has got more privilege of learning the English language faster than the child who has uneducated parents who are in the village.

3. Books and reading at home.	3. Tapi (PNG): I think parents can encourage their children to come to school every day and take part in class activities. They can also encourage their children to read books and single notices.
4. Parents create a suitable learning environment at home.	4. Veronica (PNG): I as a teacher would say they [parents] need to create an environment for them at home which is more suitable for the student to learn at home. Because they are the first teachers. When they come to school I am the second teacher.
Home support reality	
5a. Students are not prepared for school. 5b. Students are unfamiliar with school rules.	5. Gracie (Australia): They are not schooled in any way outside of the school. They have got to learn a whole new set of structures and rules that you put in place and I think it is very unfamiliar to be sitting in front of a person all day who is talking at you. Trying to teach you and setting you down to work when they have such freedom out in the rest of the day and people not telling them what to do all the time as well. I think that impacts on the behaviour in the classroom a lot.
6. Students lack a home reading and writing model.	6. Marcia (Australia): Well there's a lack at home of a model that does read or write. I believe it's difficult for these children – they just don't see that in the adult. It's probably questionable in their mind: 'Why do I have to do it?'
7. Limited parental involvement in school.	7. Samantha (PNG): Most of the kids that have no [parental] concern about them when they come into the school, like they would just sit down like an empty bin or like a chair or desk [and do nothing] and when it's time to go, they go. When it's time to, they would go out and play, they go out and play. They do not take school seriously.

In the 'Home support' references, teachers described how the home environment could support class learning. A suitable learning environment at home was one that would motivate children to learn at school (reference 4). A supportive home environment was seen as one that included educated parents (reference 2), offered reading and writing materials (reference 3), and supported the goals and aims of the school (reference 1). However, many teachers recognised that this was not the reality for most of their students. Home learning was seen as embodying freedom, so students were unprepared for the controlled class environment (reference 5). The absence of adults at home modelling reading and writing made it difficult for students in Traditional language communities to learn at school (reference 6). Teachers felt that their students struggled in their learning in class because they did not have the required supportive home environment.

5.2.3.3 *Learning contrast*: Results summary

The *Learning contrast* references detailed in the 'Learning activities' and 'Home support' final codes identify far more differences than similarities between the home and school learning environments. More teachers identified differences between these two contexts, and the total number of references describing differences was higher than the references describing similarities. This emphasis on difference is shown in the participant and reference tallies in Table 5.10, and illustrated in Figure 5.5.

Table 5.10 Interview references identifying differences and similarities in home and school learning environments

	No. of teachers /20	No. of references
Total	12	25
Learning differences	8	20
Learning similarities	4	5
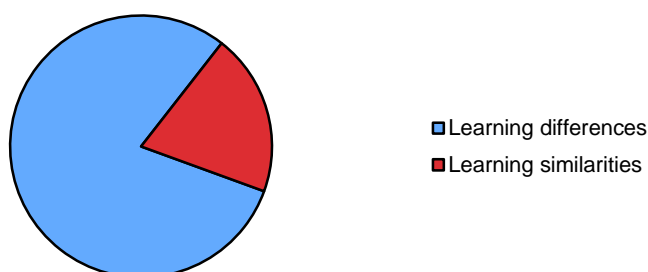
Figure 5.5 Percentage of interview references identifying differences and similarities in home and school learning environments

These results indicate that when teachers compared their students' school and community learning environments, they identified substantial differences.

...

The investigation of the first research question – 'What do teachers understand is the extent of the English environment that their Indigenous Traditional language students experience?' – demonstrated an understanding by teachers that the English environment

experienced by their students had a limited presence in students' daily lives. Teachers observed few opportunities for their students to experience English in their communities; even at school, students often used their Traditional language rather than English. Teachers also assessed that the English environment was not able to offer many attainable benefits. When comparing the community learning environment with school learning, teachers found many differences between these learning contexts. This study brings together all these references that reveal a limited presence of English in students' daily lives. The references included 22 different items, given by many teachers, which indicate an understanding of a limited English presence. While there were 13 references that refer to an active English environment they were made by individual teachers who often pointed to only a few of their students with a Traditional language background (for example, see Table 5.4, reference 1a).

The references that teachers made for each of Research Question 1's classifying codes were used as stimulus for the focus group discussions. In their discussions, focus groups explored and expanded teachers' understanding of the English environment experienced by students who live in Traditional language communities.

5.3 Focus group results

Focus groups were the second phase of data collection. These groups were used to gather data from the discussion and interaction of the teachers as they explored and extended the important issues raised in the interviews. Two focus groups were held in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, then two in the desert region of north-west Australia.

The information gathered in each focus group for Research Question 1 was coded using the same classifying codes as the interviews: *English opportunities*, *English benefits* and *Learning contrast*. The main classifying codes that each focus group discussed will be presented in Sections 5.3.1 to 5.3.3. The combined results of all the focus groups for each classifying code will be reported in Sections 5.3.3 to 5.3.6.

5.3.1 Papua New Guinea focus groups

The two PNG focus groups were held in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Both groups were held in the same school. The teachers in the first group had all been part of the interviews, while none of the participants in the second group had been interviewed previously. Table 5.11 presents each research sub-question discussed, the applicable classifying codes, the numbers of teachers involved in that discussion and the number of references made.

Table 5.11 PNG focus groups: Tally

Research sub-question	Classifying code	No. of teachers /11	No. of references
1a. What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English?	English opportunities	10	28
1b. What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English?	English benefits	5	7
1c. What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning?	Learning contrast	11	29

In their discussion of students' experience of the English environment, the PNG focus groups concentrated on the low level of English opportunities, the limits of English benefits, and the contrast between community and school learning environments. The importance of the different classifying codes varied and is illustrated by a comparison of the percentage of references for each code, as displayed in Figure 5.6.
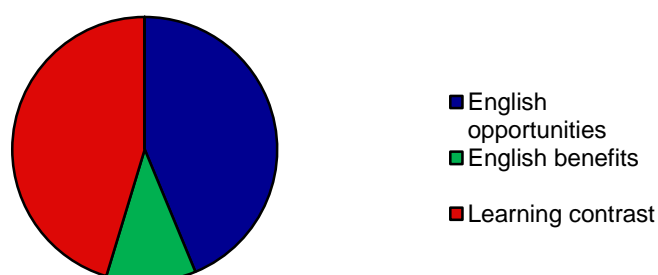
Figure 5.6   Percentages of references to classifying codes made by PNG focus groups

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Figure 5.6 shows *English opportunities* and *Learning contrast* as the two most important discussion areas, each accounting for 45 per cent of the references made. The PNG focus groups placed more emphasis on *Learning contrast* than did the interviewees. As an aside, the teachers in the PNG focus groups showed evidence of being very experienced in discussing educational issues with each other. It was interesting to observe that both groups of teachers were very polite and respectful with each other; they praised the good points raised and quietly questioned some points made by their peers.

5.3.2 Australian focus groups

The Australian focus groups consisted of two different groups in the same school. The participants in the first group were all teachers. Four of the teachers were non-Indigenous; they had worked together for four years and were very experienced in discussing issues with each other. The other two teachers were Indigenous to Papua New Guinea. The second group consisted of five Aboriginal teacher assistants working at the same school as the teachers in the first focus group. As the groups were made up of participants of different professional levels and with different experiences in the school system, it is useful to examine their responses separately.

5.3.2.1 Australian Teachers Focus Group

The Australian Teachers Focus Group concentrated its discussion on the contrast between school learning and community learning, providing references in the *Learning contrast* classifying code. Its second area of discussion was the limited opportunities that students had to experience English, which was classified within *English opportunities*. A comparison of the percentage of references made by the Australian Teachers Focus Group, showing the importance of *Learning contrast* in the group's discussion, is illustrated in Figure 5.7. All six members made references within each classifying code; the number of references made is shown on the diagram.
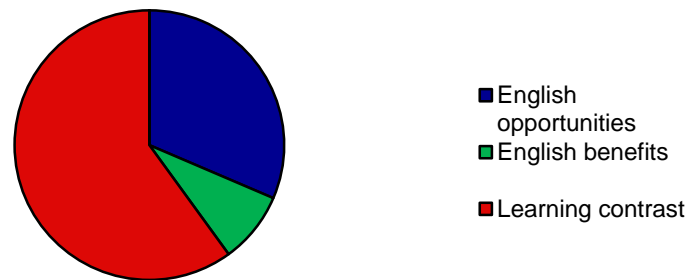
Figure 5.7   Percentage of references to classifying codes made by Australian Teachers Focus Group

This focus group placed more emphasis on *Learning contrast*. As will be shown in Chapter 7, this is very different from the interviewees' emphasis on *English opportunities.*

5.3.2.2   Aboriginal Teacher Assistants (ATA) Focus Group

The life experiences of the Aboriginal teacher assistants who made up the second Australian focus group were very different from those of the teachers in the first focus group. All of the Aboriginal teacher assistants were indigenous to the local community and were members of the school community: their unique qualities as parents or guardians of students in the school, and their previous attendance at the community school have been noted. The dynamics of the Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group discussion were different to the dynamics of the other three focus groups. Participants discussed as a group, rather than responding and reacting individually as other group members did. Further, the Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group tended to reach a consensus more often than the other focus groups. This may have been because a consensus approach is the normal process for community discussions.

A member of the focus group often helped in explaining the questions: when one member of the group felt she understood the question, she would explain it to the other group members, who would ask her clarifying questions. The group would then discuss the question among themselves in Traditional language, which the researcher did not understand. After the discussion, one group member would report the discussion back to the researcher and invite other members to repeat in English some of the things they had said in Traditional language. This led to some of the group discussion being conducted in English. At times, group members did not fully understand the question, or they decided

to discuss another issue; nevertheless, their insights on any topic were always interesting and relevant.

Caring for the wellbeing of the participants in this focus group was a special challenge for the researcher, as the area discussed was very personal for them. Concern for their wellbeing arose when they spoke about their own education and their experiences of school and rules, especially when they recalled not being allowed to use their Traditional language. As this topic had the potential to be an emotional and sensitive area, the researcher decided to change topics. At the end of the focus group the Aboriginal teacher assistants appeared happy to have participated in the discussion, and their laughter during the discussion showed their enjoyment and surprise at their insights.

The Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group discussed questions by talking about students who had demonstrated the issue being discussed. As noted above, these episodes were mostly discussed in the Traditional language, then translated into English for the researcher. As a result, the English transcript of the discussion does not exactly replicate the Traditional language discussion. Summarising the discussion, rather than quoting the teacher assistants directly, better conveys the researcher's understanding of what was said.

The group's main discussion was classified as *English opportunities*. Members spoke about the lack of English in the community and the dominance of the Traditional language, even at school. Figure 5.8 compares the number of group summaries given for each code. The figure does not compare the actual references, as these were mainly in Traditional language.
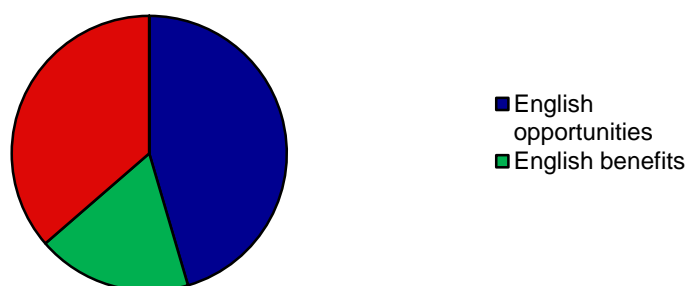
Figure 5.8   Percentage of group summaries within each classifying code made by Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group

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The Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group paid a similar amount of attention to the *English opportunities* and *Learning contrast* classifying codes. The teacher assistants did identify a few occasions where students experienced English in their community, and also noted that English was used less in the school than it was when they were students and the exclusive use of English was enforced. The teacher assistants noted significant differences between the way students learned at school and the way they learned at home, which they said was quickly observed by the students themselves. The discussion they did conduct on *English benefits* focused on the limitations on students' ability to achieve benefits using English. This group's ability to describe issues using students they all knew as examples was its distinguishing characteristic.

5.3.3 Overall focus group results

The four focus groups discussed each of the sub-questions for Research Question 1. Different groups placed emphasis on different classifying codes. More than 80 per cent of the focus group teachers contributed references for each classifying code. The remaining teachers usually indicated that they agreed with someone else's statement rather than repeating the statement. This high involvement of teachers in the focus groups means that a strongly representative view has been gained of their understanding of the English environment experienced by students living in Traditional language communities. Figure 5.9 shows the percentage of references made for each classifying code. The references made by the Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group are not included in the reference total, as these were mostly made in their Traditional language, making it difficult to quantify their references.
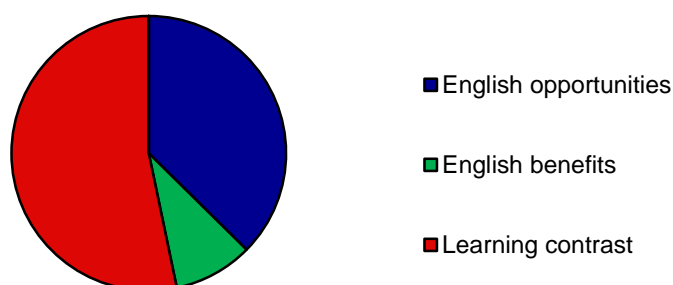
Figure 5.9   Percentage of references to classifying codes made by focus groups (not including Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group)

The results show that the most important area discussed by focus groups was *Learning contrast*, with extensive discussion of *English opportunities* evident as well. Interestingly, *English benefits* was mentioned during the focus groups but did not provide many references.

The results of focus group discussions of teachers' understanding of the English environment experience for students in Traditional language communities will now be presented using the classifying codes *English opportunities*, *English benefits* and *Learning contrast.* As was the case for the interviews results (Section 5.2), each classifying code groups together related final codes. The results will be reported using the same final codes as the interviews. One new final code was created for new information, as explained below.

5.3.4   English opportunities

Focus groups were presented with key quotes from the interviews for each of the final codes of *English opportunities* (see Appendixes 6, 7 and 8). These quotes were used as prompts for focus group discussion. A selection of focus group references for 'English exposure', 'Traditional language' and 'Student comparison' final codes are provided in the second column of Table 5.12. References by Aboriginal teacher assistants (ATAs) are summaries of the group's discussion reported by one of the participants. The main points of the references are listed in the first column.

Table 5.12 Summary of focus group references to the *English opportunities* classifying code

Final codes	References
English exposure 1. Students only use English when with non-Indigenous people.	1a. ATA Focus Group: Students only interact with English outside of school only when they see non-Indigenous people at the store, health and education centres. During the holidays volunteers come and run holiday activities, the kids are happy to meet with them and talk to them in English. All other times the children speak the local language. 1b. Malcolm (PNG Focus Group 1): The English language is mostly not practised with the surrounding environment in which students are involved. It is mostly taking place in the classroom where English is being spoken by the English-speaking person.
Traditional language 2. Students grow up in their Traditional language.	2. Malbola (PNG Focus Group 1): English is a second language, we can say it is a distant language because they have been raised up from their own vernacular for the rest of their life … they enter the school environment just for some hours … and when they go home most of their lives are being worked in their own vernacular so we can say that this language is a distant language for the English learners.
3. English is a strange language.	3. Doris (PNG Focus Group 2): When they come to school and in the classroom and the teacher is using English and speaking English, he or she is taking a different to approach where they cannot fit themselves in because English is a foreign language they cannot understand and because they were not brought up in English … And they regard English as a strange language.
4. English is difficult and hard work.	4. Lisa (PNG Focus Group 2): The only problem they have is with English. They sometimes could not understand what the teacher says because maybe the words they are speaking is more expensive (difficult) or something so they find it hard to understand. … Most of the time their learning takes place with their own vernacular they speak their own Tok Ples and at the same time they are learning in their own Tok Ples.
5. English is not known to be a language to some new students beginning school.	5. ATA Focus Group: There was one boy in kindy who only speaks English but a local boy would always speak to him in the local language and expect a response. One day the local boy asked to borrow a toy car from the English-speaking boy – the local boy could not understand why the English-speaking boy did not understand. He thought everyone knew his own local language.

Student comparison	
6. Urban students need to use English.	6. Fred (PNG Focus Group 2): I think English is more distant for our Tok Ples student compared to the town student because … the type of environments surrounding Tok Ples speakers doesn't really require speaking of English in the villages. They don't need to speak English in the villages.
7. Students with a Creole background are more familiar with English.	7. Veronica (PNG Focus Group 1): I agree with that too. Because in 2003 I had a student who came from a Pidgin background from the plantation. In that class I saw that he understood me more than the others. I agree, with that one coming from a Pidgin background, knowing Pidgin before coming to school helps to understand English well.
8. The similarities between Creoles and English help students using English.	8. Paul (PNG Focus Group 2): Whereas that Tok Pisin student will learn faster because, as what Andrew has said, Tok Pisin is being created in a way that most of the English has been included. He will be in a better position to learn because of the language.
9. For urban students from different language backgrounds, English may be the common language they need to use.	9. Fran (Australian Teachers Focus Group): I would say there is a big difference because those kids in the town school are exposed to watching TV and the fact that they all don't have the same language. They come from all over. If one group, one kid, wants to speak his or the language the next kid will not understand it because the language is very different. So the best way that kid can communicate is in English so they could understand each other.
10. Urban students are more willing and ready to use English.	10. ATA Focus Group: A five-year-old boy went away from the community and stayed in a town for a few months. When he came back and returned to school, when he came back he was using English more often compared to other students. He was now speaking to his non-Indigenous teachers in English. When other students speak to him in the local language he replied in English. Another six-year-old boy lived in a town when he was younger. He now lives in the community. He usually speaks English to everyone and is now learning the local language from other students.

The 'English exposure' references made by the focus groups confirmed teachers' understanding that students do not often experience English in community life (references 1a, 1b). The focus groups also confirmed that exposure to English in class mainly depends on how much the teacher uses English with students (reference 3). Focus groups made an important contribution through their 'Traditional language' references, discussing the extensive use of the Traditional language and the minimal use of English (references 2, 5). Focus groups saw how the dominance of the Traditional language makes it difficult for their students to relate to English, a language that is far from their

daily lives spent immersed in Traditional language. Teachers referred to English as 'strange' and ' foreign' (reference 3), unnecessary for daily life (reference 6), and even as an 'expensive' language, needing a lot of time and effort (reference 4). One child was reported as being confused as to why another student did not know his Traditional language, thinking that his Traditional language was everyone's language (reference 5).

Focus group teachers examined statements from the interviews in the 'Student comparison' final code, which reported teachers' observations of the greater ability of urban Indigenous students to use English in the classroom. Focus group teachers agreed that their students experienced less interaction with the English environment than urban Indigenous students who were speaking a Creole or English dialect (references 6, 7, 8). While some interview references observed that urban Indigenous students performed better in class, focus group discussions went further, exploring why urban Indigenous students did better. Focus groups saw that, in addition to having more opportunities to experience English, urban students needed to use English more in their daily lives (reference 9). Therefore urban students come to school willing and ready to use English, because it is more familiar to them than it is to students living in Traditional language communities (reference 10). The Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group engaged in an interesting discussion about a student who had been away from the community for a few months and lived in a town. When this young Indigenous student returned to the community he was more capable and confident in his use of English (reference 10).

Focus group discussions supported the contention of the teachers in interviews that students with a Traditional language background had very few opportunities to experience English in their daily lives. The contribution of focus groups was not only to confirm the interview results, but also to look further into the reasons for these limited English opportunities for students with a Traditional language background. Through this discussion, focus groups added to the information on teachers' understanding of the English environment experienced by their students, as expressed in the *English opportunities* code.

5.3.5 *English benefits*

Each focus group included some discussion that could be classified as *English benefits.*
Focus group discussions largely confirmed what had already been said during interviews.
As Figures 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 demonstrate, *English benefits* has the least references of
the three classifying codes. However, for PNG Focus Group 2 particularly, *English benefits*
was an important discussion area. These teachers responded to some *English benefits*
references from the interviews and discussed the limitations on these benefits in the
school lives and future lives of their students. This focus group extended the interview
references by considering the reasons behind the limitations on English benefits. Most of
the discussion is recorded in the 'School benefits' final code, as the discussion centred on
the difficulties their students experienced in benefiting from English in the classroom.
Table 5.13 consists of the main points and references, primarily made by PNG Focus
Group 2, which added new information to what was discussed during the interviews.

Table 5.13 Summary of focus group references to the *English benefits*
classifying code

Final codes	References
School benefits	
1. Students' experience of only one place discourages them from expressing themselves.	1a. Rachael (PNG Focus Group 2): But students like our students, when they are so confined to one environment, it is hard for them to speak openly … they do not express themselves – especially in English. … They think that they will make a mistake and they will become discouraged.
	1b. John (PNG Focus Group 2): This particular kid – that he found it a bit hard to even to speak up – when it is English to answer a question in simple English. Because that was a problem he had, that stopped him from learning.
2. Students are not confident because they find English difficult.	2a. Tina (ATA Focus Group): When we talk to our students in our language they always listen in and out of class. But when the teacher speaks to them in English they do not understand. When the students talk to their teacher they speak quietly because they are ashamed of making a mistake.
	2b. Tapi (PNG Focus Group 2): As students coming from societies in Papua New Guinea, most of them come from the village and they speak their own vernacular, so when they come to school they find it hard to speak English. When they come to school, when they make mistakes they do feel ashamed, they are scared … they feel discouraged.

3. Students are confused by their teacher's English, which they do not understand.	3. Lisa (PNG Focus Group 2): Some of the students get discouraged from learning at school when the teacher uses English which is difficult for the student to understand. Because sometimes when the student cannot understand what the teacher is teaching they usually get bored and they feel discouraged to learn in the classroom.
4. Students cannot see the purpose of education in English as they observe community life.	4. Fred (PNG Focus Group 2): The Tok Ples students' learning is very much affected when they do not see people living and working in a number of situations, because in town areas the Tok Ples students – they are not told or they do not have the experience of education, the significance of education, the reason for going to school and the importance of the kind of language they acquire.

In this discussion, focus groups built on the interviews' references by explaining how shame, fear of mistakes and lack of confidence in English limited the benefits students could experience from using English (references 1a, 1b). The focus groups examined the interview references about lack of student confidence and how this may be exacerbated by students not observing the usefulness and purpose of English in their communities: they suggested that the limited community experience of students contributed to this lack of confidence (reference 4). The difficulty in achieving the benefits of English was understood to be further intensified by the confusion caused when students did not understand their teacher's English (reference 3).

5.3.6 Learning contrast

Focus group discussion confirmed and added to the interview references contained in the 'Learning activities' and 'Home support' final codes within the *Learning contrast* classifying code. In addition, focus groups provided new information that emerged as a new final code, labelled 'Learning area'. Table 5.14 provides a selection of 'Learning activities', 'Learning area' and 'Home support' references as evidence of how the final codes have been derived. These focus group final codes extend the final codes from the interviews.

Table 5.14   Summary of focus group references to the *Learning contrast*
classifying code

Final codes	References
Learning activities *School learning contrasts with community learning through:* 1. Unfamiliar learning rules.	1. John (PNG Focus Group 1): When kids are at home they wander around – it is like when kids are in class they are guided by certain rules which they have to follow. But when they are at home they are not guided by rules. … Maybe they would be shy or something to experience these materials [pencils, paper, etc.] or whatever we are using in the school. That it is why it is difficult for them to learn or do something using the school materials. As time goes they come to adapt themselves to use these things so they come to learn.
2. Using different learning materials.	2a. Ann (Australian Teachers Focus Group): To hold a book, to try to hold it. The whole concept of what a book is about or those kinds of things, they just don't have any idea about. 2b. Lily (Australian Teachers Focus Group): I find that when teaching the little ones I have to teach far more concepts to these children that they don't bring them from home.
3. Having less experiential learning.	3. Andrew (PNG Focus Group 2): From the question I have just seen it is true as students come to school they seem to sit down and listen to the teacher who is trained to speak in English. As learners they are just observers and they listen and they do activities in English but as they go home their learning is taking place by students themselves – they go out to experience things, feel, touch, in their own vernacular language.
4. Teacher-directed instruction.	4a. Fred (PNG Focus Group 2): When students come to school the learning of the kids in the classroom is much like a teacher-centred learning taking place. Where the teacher directs the class and the students are not interested in the learning taking place. The learning in the class is also sort of an instruction where the students don't cope up fully to their abilities so it is sort of like oppression within them. 4b. Tina (ATA Focus Group): Children at home learn by listening, watching and doing. When they come to school they find it different. There was this boy, when he came to school for the first time he was confused by the way they were learning at school. After school he went home and told his grandfather that they learn differently at school. His grandfather told him, 'At home we do it this way and at school it is different'.

Learning area	
School may create learning contrast by:	
5. Students learning topics that they have not experienced in community life.	5. John (PNG Focus Group 1): Students have to experience some things before they knew what they are learning. That helps them come to understand what thing, that word, means something. If they don't see something and then they hear this word for the first time, then they don't know what this word means or what's the picture that this word describes. So I believe students have to experience some things in different situations or different contexts before they know what they are learning about.
6. Students facing the double challenge of learning unfamiliar topics and English at the same time.	6a. Veronica (PNG Focus Group 1): So learning English is a little bit difficult in that, in that situation when the students are not familiar with what we are talking about, or they do not experience what they are saying on that particular topic.
	6b. Fred (PNG Focus Group 2): I personally think the kind of learning the teacher is trying to impart on the students should be based on the knowledge and experience of the students – it should be familiar to them.
	6c. Rachael (PNG Focus Group 1): So as they come to school in Grade 3 they have big books written by the teachers and books by the education department. Whatever that they provide, the contents should be easily read and understood by the ones who are coming. Not taking things from out of the blue in another country's context where students do not understand.
Home support	
7. Parents need to encourage their children to read and write at home.	7. Lisa (PNG Focus Group 2): It will be best if we educate all the parents so that they can encourage their own children to read and write at home – at least read and write at home so that they come to school they will find it easy to read and write so it will be easy for them to speak their language.
8. Parents need to provide learning materials for reading and writing.	8. Rachael (PNG Focus Group 1): When they [parents] go to shops they get little books and some parents even speak to their children in English and they buy little books and other things that go with the learning of English and the teaching in the classroom.
9. Children need good health and nutrition.	9. Bill (Australian Teachers Focus Group): This may be out of the context but the health of the student. They need enough rest, good food – they would have good learning.
10. Children need to see adults in their community achieving in work and learning because of their education.	10. Fran (Australian Teachers Focus Group): I think it is the environment that a child would look around – people around him or her – and see if people are achieving things, if they have gone somewhere or achieved something in life through education. If everyone else around him is doing that, then they feel that they need to achieve those goals too so they are not looked down out. So that becomes a drive for them.

11. Parents need to support and encourage their children.	11a.	Pam (ATA Focus Group): Parents should talk to their kids and when they are at home – they should talk to their kids nicely and ask them to go to school. Some of them big ones, they don't want to go to school.
	11b.	Lily (Australian Teachers Focus Group): That somebody has the expectation that this child can do what they want, that they can succeed. So the energy is put into their success, whether it is a parent or a teacher or the child themselves.
	11c.	Tapi (PNG Focus Group 1): But only those parents who have concern for their children's future and education and they always encourage their students to learn and to follow the advice the parents give to their children. Those are the ones who are fit – at the end they complete their education.

Focus groups enhanced the understanding of *Learning contrast* provided in the interviews. The focus groups' 'Learning activities' references confirmed the contention of teachers in interviews that community learning was more active and informal than school learning (reference 1). In interviews, teachers listed the differences between school and community but spent little time considering how these differences were created. While this was not specifically addressed by interview teachers, their references tended to imply that community learning created the differences. Conversely, focus groups discussed how school learning created the contrast. Focus group members mentioned the different learning materials (reference 2), the use of rules for learning (reference 1) and the less experiential style of learning used at school (reference 3). The class learning activities, so different from home learning, were seen to make it difficult for students to achieve their full potential (reference 4a). The confusion caused by the strange class learning environment is illustrated by the story of the boy who began school, then went home perplexed about the differences between the way he was learning at school, and the way his grandfather and others taught him at home (reference 4b).

Focus group references about the topics of learning had not been mentioned during references, so a new final code, 'Learning area', was added to the *Learning contrast* classification. In 'Learning area' references, focus group members spoke about the difficulties experienced by their students when they were taught topics outside of their community life experience (reference 5). When students have limited experience of a topic, they have the double challenge of learning an unfamiliar topic through unfamiliar English (reference 6a).

In the 'Home support' final code, focus groups elaborated on the interview recommendations of parental involvement in education and encouragement of children's learning by promoting a belief that their children can succeed at school (references 11a, 11b, 11c). While teachers in the interviews focused on the lack of home support, teachers in focus group discussions came up with recommendations for families. In addition to suggesting that families encourage their children in their school learning, they also mentioned providing reading books and writing materials at home (references 7, 8) and providing a nutritionally adequate and healthy lifestyle for their children (reference 9). In this way, focus groups supported and extended the 'Home support' references.

The dynamic of focus group discussions meant that, as the teachers reacted and responded to each other, new information was created. As a result, focus groups added to the description of teachers' understanding of the English environment experienced by students in Traditional language communities, as expressed in the *English opportunities*, *English benefits* and *Learning contrast* classifying codes. This is an understanding of an English environment that presents few opportunities, has limited benefits, and helps create a learning contrast between school and community learning; these features may contribute to an understanding of an English environment that has a limited presence.

The next section completes the teachers' discussion cycle of the first research question as it presents the results of the critical groups.

5.4   Critical group results

The contribution of the critical groups was to discuss the relevance and validity of the main points derived from the interview and focus group references. Two critical groups were held in Australia and one in Papua New Guinea.

When potential group members were invited to participate, they were given an outline of the project (Appendix 10). After accepting the invitation, they were given a list of statements derived from the interviews and focus groups. These statements were developed from the researcher's understanding of the results at that time, and are therefore not as complete as the final codes already presented in this chapter. The critical

group statements that relate to Research Question 1 are shown in Table 5.15, along with the relevant sub-question, and the classifying code in parentheses.

Table 5.15   Critical group statements

Statements	Research sub-question and classifying code
1. The ability of students with an Indigenous language background to interact with students and other people in English is a significant factor in a student's ability to learn through English. ('English exposure') 2. English-speaking communities are far from the communities of their students. This impacts on their students' ability to use and learn English. ('Traditional language') 3. The English experience of Indigenous students speaking Traditional Indigenous languages is significantly different from Indigenous students who speak an English dialect or Creole. ('Student comparison')	1a. What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English? (*English opportunities*)
4. Students with an Indigenous language background require motivation to succeed in learning in English as English is not their own language. This motivation may be family support, natural ability or an understanding of the benefits of education.	1b. What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English? (*English benefits*)
5. A student's experience of contexts influences their ability to learn. This includes both the context of the topic (e.g. a unit on cities) and the context of learning that is oral and written language (e.g. learning by watching and listening compared to learning by reading and writing).	1c. What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning? (*Learning contrast*)

Teachers in the critical groups chose the statements they wished to discuss and asked the researcher questions to clarify and explain how statements were determined. Each of the three critical groups was given the same main statements associated with each of the research sub-question codes. The critical group references were coded using the same classifying codes and final codes as the interviews and focus groups.

The Teachers Critical Group was not part of the original plan for critical groups. However, when the time came for the critical groups, these three teachers were willing and able to participate, and because of their unique teaching experience the researcher decided to involve this group. The three teachers in this group were from Papua New Guinea, and had taught students living in Traditional language communities in Papua New Guinea and in Australia. Most of their discussion was on the limited English opportunities

of their students. Their discussion of *English opportunities* concentrated mainly on the 'Student comparison' final code, comparing the English opportunities of their students living in Traditional language communities with the English opportunities of Indigenous students from urban areas. The teachers in this critical group added to the information from the interviews and focus groups, as they were able to reflect on their experiences in both Papua New Guinea and Australia.

The Educators Critical Group contained two educators involved in the support of teachers working in schools in Australian Traditional language communities, and a principal who had worked in an Australian Traditional language community. The two educators also had experience teaching in Traditional language communities. This group especially verified the lack of English activity in Traditional language communities and the impact of this on student learning. They provided evidence by giving examples from communities in which they had lived and taught.

The Academics Critical Group consisted of five academics from a teachers' college in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. This group contributed references on *English opportunities, English benefits* and *Learning contrast.* Most of their references were concerned with *English benefits*; they especially noted the impact of a limited vocabulary and motivation on students' ability to benefit from class learning. Their discussion on *English opportunities* reinforced the discussion in the other critical groups; members agreed that students had very few opportunities to experience English in their communities. They also stressed the vast differences between school and community learning experiences.

Altogether, the three critical groups discussed each of the codes and elaborated on them. Table 5.16 shows the number of teachers who contributed references and the number of references for each classifying code.

Table 5.16   Critical groups: Tally

Classifying code	Teachers Critical Group		Educators Critical Group		Academics Critical Group		Total	
	No. of teachers /3	No. of ref'ences	No. of teachers /3	No. of ref'ences	No. of teachers /5	No. of ref'ences	No. of teachers	No. of ref'ences
English opportunities	3	7	3	5	4	5	10	17
English benefits	2	2	3	6	5	8	10	16
Learning contrast	1	1	1	3	3	5	5	9

Each critical group had high participant involvement and references in discussions on *English opportunities.* While the Educators and Academics Critical Groups had important discussions of *English benefits*, this classifying code contained only a brief exchange of comments in the Teachers Critical Group. Extended discussion of *Learning contrast* only occurred among the members of the Academics Critical Group.

The relative importance of the different classifying codes in the discussions by critical groups is shown in Figure 5.10.
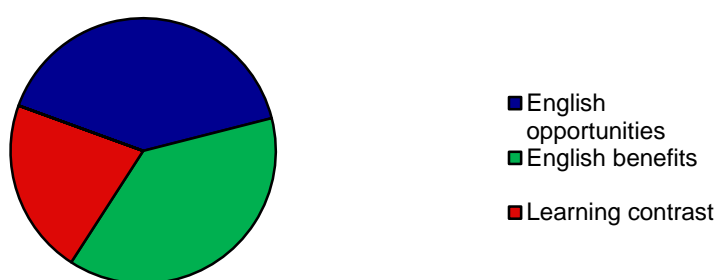
Figure 5.10   Percentage of references to classifying codes made by critical groups

Critical groups' discussions provided the most references for *English opportunities* and *English benefits. Learning contrast* had the fewest references from critical groups. The discussions both confirmed and extended the main points of the interviews and focus groups on teachers' understanding of the English environment experienced by students living in Traditional language communities. The main points made by the critical groups,

in addition to those already made during interviews and focus groups, are presented below.

5.4.1 *English opportunities*

The critical groups verified the information gathered during the first two data collection phases – that students have limited opportunities to experience English, which is the result of living in a language environment that almost exclusively consists of the Traditional language. As Table 5.16 shows, critical groups' discussion on *English opportunities* provided the most references. The critical groups contributed to *English opportunities* by their discussion of how students are personally affected by their limited opportunities to experience English. The new points made by critical groups on each of the *English opportunities* final codes – 'English exposure', 'Traditional language' and 'Student comparison' – are listed in Table 5.17, together with a selection of the references.

Table 5.17 Summary of critical group references to the *English opportunities* classifying code

Final codes and main points	References
English exposure 1. English is a confronting, foreign language.	1. Jill (Academics Critical Group): When first coming into the classroom the students' prior knowledge and everything associated with knowledge and learning has been in the Indigenous language and when coming into the classroom situation they are confronted with a foreign language which is the English language.
2. Students do not have the need or opportunity to learn in English outside of school.	2. Lora (Educators Critical Group): I think that if they don't have the need or the chance to practise and use English outside of school then yes, I think it can be an issue. Because even then if they are only using English at school then as soon as they go home or shops or anywhere else in language and there is no chance to practise English then it is going to affect their ability to use and learn in English.

Traditional language 3. Although English is the language chosen for the school it is not the language of choice for the community.	3. Helen (Educators Critical Group): Even though [there has] been a decision made to have English as the language of instruction at school it is still not the language of choice of the people living in the community.
Student comparison 4. Students who live in Creole-speaking extended families in Traditional language communities do better in class.	4. Kate (Teachers Critical Group): Like most of the kids that we have here they come from this situation where they live in the camps and their Traditional language is their main language. Then amongst all these students we have a little group of kids, sometimes I hear them use this Creole – in learning they are fast.

As the references in Table 5.17 show, the critical groups added to the information on teachers' understanding of limited English opportunities by stressing the impact on the role of the student. The 'English exposure' final code included references from critical groups that described how students were confronted by English, a language they had rarely been exposed to prior to school, as all community learning and knowledge takes place in the Traditional language (reference 1). Even after experiencing English at school, they do not have the opportunity to use English in their communities (reference 2). One reference in the 'Traditional language' final code made the important point that although English has been made the language for learning at school, it is not the language of choice for the community (reference 4). The impact of the limited English opportunities of students with a Traditional language background is illustrated by a 'Student comparison' reference, in which it was observed that students with a Creole background learned more quickly than Traditional language students in the same class (reference 4).

5.4.2 *English benefits*

Critical groups, like the focus groups and interviewees before them, discussed the potential benefits that students in Traditional language communities may achieve using English. The references they made that were included in the *English benefits* final codes of 'School benefits' and 'Future benefits' are listed, with their main points, in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18   Summary of critical group references to the *English benefits* classifying code

Final codes and main points	References
School benefits	
1. Motivating students is the responsibility of all those involved in students' learning. Teachers must provide it especially when others do not.	1. Fran (Teachers Critical Group): Motivation is to come from their house and family, from the people living around them, from the school, the kind of friends they have. If that motivation is not given from outside of the classroom then yes, the teacher should really try to provide as much as she or he can inside the classroom.
2. A student may have understanding but their limited vocabulary prevents them from expressing the understanding.	2. Jill (Academics Critical Group): But it is just the language barrier that sometimes hinders the child from really expressing, although they have already pictured it up in their mind how they want to express but in terms of speaking use the right vocabulary is quite hard for the Indigenous child in the classroom.
3. English vocabulary is especially difficult for Traditional language students as, unlike Creoles or English dialects, there are no connections with Traditional languages.	3. Bill (Teachers Critical Group): The significant thing is there is something about the structure of Pidgin that helps. In the vernacular [unlike Creole] there is no word that has a connection, there is no same word that is used in the Traditional language that can be found in any English word. All the traditional language words are different from the English word.
Future benefits	
4. Children may not be motivated like adults to value English for its future benefits.	4. Sue (Academics Critical Group): Motivation: like I can see an adult being motivated because they have a purpose in life, wanting to learn English or whatever it is they want to learn. But with a child there is a difference here. With adults, they have a purpose in life, to want to learn English – not so much with a child.

The 'School benefit' references made by the critical groups stressed that teachers should not only be aware of the factors that hampered students in achieving benefits and how these factors affected their learning, but they also should understand teachers' responsibility to respond to those limitations on benefits (reference 1). This represented a change in perspective; during the interviews and focus groups, teachers seemed to be more interested in the responsibility of families or students, rather than teachers, to somehow overcome the obstacles to achieving benefits. One obstacle noted was the effect of a limited vocabulary on students benefiting from using English. The importance of vocabulary had not been considered during interviews or focus groups. A limited

vocabulary was seen to prevent students from expressing their understanding in class learning (reference 2). Although Creoles or English dialects have some similarities with English vocabulary, there is no similarity between English vocabulary and Traditional language vocabulary. Therefore students with a Traditional language background cannot benefit by making connections between their vocabulary and English (reference 3).

In their 'Future benefit' references, critical groups broadly agreed with the importance of student motivation in learning English. One participant did add a new point by questioning whether motivation in terms of future benefits may make sense to adults, but may not be a motivation for young students (reference 4).

5.4.3 Learning contrast

Learning contrast attracted the least attention by critical groups. The discussion that did take place confirmed what had already been said in interviews and focus groups. There was a brief mention in one group of the effect of the *Learning contrast* final codes on the students themselves, and how those contrasts may be reduced. The points made on *Learning contrast* for 'Learning activities' and 'Learning area', and the relevant references, are shown in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19 Summary of critical group references to the *Learning contrast* classifying code

Final codes and main points	References
Learning activities 1a. The many contrast differences between school and home learning means that students will take time to adapt. 1b. The contrast of learning activities may result in students being forced to learn in unfamiliar ways.	1. Jill (Academics Critical Group): Most of the students do not have access to books where they do not also have access to media and other things like that. So it is quite difficult at times for Indigenous students to really come to grasp with the English language. It takes a while for them to adapt. Our Indigenous students observe and do things and imitate what others do and it is not through reading that they are able to do things. But in our classrooms we force children to read and force them to speak English.
Learning area 2. Basing learning on topics outside of the local environment increases learning contrast.	2. Bill (Teachers Critical Group): Those students who are not exposed to things, I think it will be very hard for them to understand. But if things are based around the environment and using things that language speakers – if they understand the context already I think they will find it easy to explain.

The main contribution to *Learning contrast* was a 'Learning activities' final code reference that suggested how all the different contrasts of school and home learning may result in students feeling forced to adapt to learn in a way that is very different from community learning (reference 1). It was also suggested in 'Learning area' that the extent of the contrast increased when learning topics were not based on experiences in the local environment (reference 2).

Critical groups fulfilled the role of validating the statements derived from the interviews and focus groups. The statements that critical group members were given prompted them to give examples from their experiences, just as the interview and focus group participants did. As well as confirming the statements, critical groups provided additional information for each of the sub-questions that had not been provided in the earlier data phases. In summary, critical groups contributed to teachers' understanding of *English opportunities* by describing how students are made powerless by the lack of opportunities to use English when they wish to use it. For *English benefits*, critical groups added how limited vocabulary prevents students from benefiting from using English. The main contribution for *Learning contrast* was the observation that students may feel forced to adapt to the learning environment of the class.

5.5   Research Question 1: Conclusion

The three classifying codes *English opportunities*, *English benefits* and *Learning contrast* provide a basis for determining teachers' understanding of the English environment experience of Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities. The final codes within each of these classifying codes contain information that may inform an understanding of students' experience of an English environment that is limited. The results suggest an understanding of an English environment that is limited for students in terms of opportunities, benefits and learning environment.

These results will be collated in Chapter 7, in preparation for identifying the dominant themes as they apply to the understanding of the extent of the English environment experienced. Chapter 6 will report the results of the data collections phases for Research Question 2 – the investigation of teachers' understanding of the essential requirements for successful learning for students living in Traditional language communities.

6 Results for Research Question 2: Teachers' understanding of the requirements for successful learning

In this study, teachers' understanding of the essential requirements for successful learning was investigated by inviting teachers to describe their understanding of the characteristics of successful students and successful teachers. During each of the three data collection phases, teachers first discussed their understanding of the English environment **experience** of their students in Traditional language communities, as reported in Chapter 5. They then described successful students and teachers from their **experience** of teaching in Traditional language communities. Chapter 6 reports these findings of the study for each data collection phase as they apply to Research Question 2 and its two sub-questions.

6.1 Research Question 2 and sub-questions

The investigation of Research Question 2 – 'What do teachers understand are the essentials of successful learning for students who experience this extent of the English environment?' – was guided by their two sub-questions repeated below.

2a.   What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student?

2b.   What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher?

As explained in the methodology chapter (Sections 4.6.2 and 4.9), the data collected was first coded using pre-codes, then post-codes; final codes were then used to merge similar codes. Each of the sub-questions will now be given a classifying code used to group the final codes relevant to the question.

The data collected for Research Question 2a indicate that when teachers considered the characteristics of successful students, they referred to successful students they knew. As most references actually described the characteristics of successful students, the classifying code for Research Question 2a is *Successful students.* When

teachers were invited to consider the characteristics of successful teachers, most teachers focused mainly on the characteristics of successful class learning environments, rather than describing the teachers themselves. As the emphasis of the responses and their codes was on the class learning environment, the classifying code for Research Question 2b is *Successful classes.*

The investigation of Research Question 2 followed the same process as that of Research Question 1; that is, it was investigated during three data collection phases: interviews, focus groups and critical groups. The interviews provided the primary information, which was confirmed, elaborated and added to by the focus groups and critical groups. The results of Research Question 2 in this chapter follow the same sequence as the results of Research Question 1 in Chapter 5. The interview results are presented first, followed by the focus group results, then the critical group results.

6.2   Interview results

The contribution that teachers made to the investigation of teachers' understanding of the requirements for successful learning for students in Traditional language communities is shown in Table 6.1, which displays the number of references made for the classifying codes *Successful students* and *Successful classes*. Figure 6.1 compares the total references for each code.

Table 6.1   Number of references made to classifying codes during interviews

Sub-question	Classifying code	No. of references
2a. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student?	Successful students	43
2b. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher?	Successful classes	54
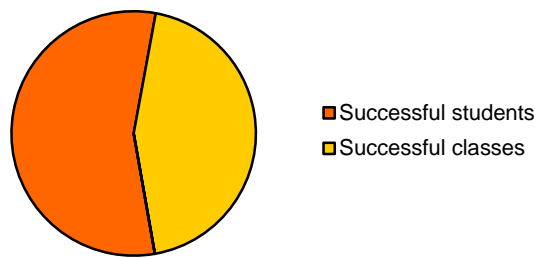
Figure 6.1 Comparison of references made to *Successful students* and *Successful teachers* classifying codes during interviews

The *Successful students* and *Successful classes* codes contain data that show teachers' understanding of the necessary requirements for successful learning by their students in Traditional language communities. The results are presented below.

6.2.1 Successful students

The first sub-question investigated teachers' understanding of the characteristics of successful students who attend primary school in Traditional language communities. The results applicable to *Successful students* are presented in their final codes: 'Learner confidence', 'Learner shame' and 'Learning skills'. Table 6.2 and Figure 6.2 show the number of teachers who contributed to each final code of *Successful students*, and the relative importance of each final code in terms of the number of references made.

Table 6.2   *Successful students*: References made to final codes in interviews

Final code	No. of teachers /19	No. of references
Learner confidence	13	20
Learner shame	11	19
Learning skills	3	4
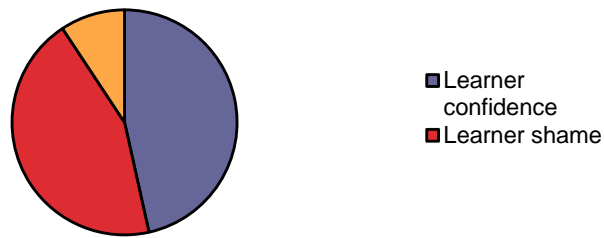
Figure 6.2   *Successful students*: Comparison of references made to final codes in interviews

As Figure 6.2 illustrates, most of the interview teachers' contribution to *Successful students* was in the final codes 'Learner confidence' and 'Learner shame', with minimal input in the 'Learning skills' final code.

The 'Learner confidence' final code references describe teachers' assessment of their students' willingness to take risks in their learning. 'Learner shame' contains references on students' fear of making mistakes. 'Learning skills' references identify the usefulness of students' prior learning for class learning. In Table 6.3, the main points are aligned with a selection of references made for each of the *Successful students* final codes.

Table 6.3 Summary of interview references to the to the *Successful students* final codes

Final codes and main points	References
Learner confidence	
1. Have a commitment to learning.	1a. Mabola (PNG): The most important thing is they have to commit themselves.
	1b. Pota (PNG): So they start to try to speak at least more and when they can speak at least one or two sentences they even get more interested. … Firstly they want to understand the subjects which are taught in schools. Secondly they want to communicate with the others.
2. Enjoy learning.	2. Greg (Australia): They also need enjoyment; if they don't enjoy it in the long term their efforts are just going to peter off.
3. Have a desire to learn.	3. Ruth (Australia): They need to have a need or want to discover what it is that's sort of, you know, aspire to it I suppose.
Learner shame	
4. Passive dependence on the teacher.	4. Gracie (Australia): The kids don't have that independence in their working and they need a lot of guidance.
5. Lack of confidence to take initiative.	5. Greg (Australia): Here the students need close attention, they're dependent so you need to cater for that.
6. Unwillingness to take risks in learning.	6. Marcia (Australia): I just noticed that they seem hesitant to go ahead. I explain work to them but they like to keep checking back as they've done part of it – 'Is this right?', 'Am I okay?'. I know they understand them but they don't exhibit a lot of confidence going from one step in an activity to another.
7. Fear and shame of making mistakes.	7. Rachael (PNG): The students inside the classroom, they give one- or two-word answer because they feel scared about themselves. They have fear in themselves. They feel that when they make a mistake they feel that they are bad students or they feel bad about themselves.
Learning skills	
8. Good visual skills.	8. Greg (Australia): The students have an amazing ability to recognise, engage and understand and interpret with visual imagery so I think you can capitalise on that.
9. An ability to listen carefully.	9. Catherine (Australia): They're very good at listening, I suppose – they're really good at listening to stories and listening to instructions.
10. A great difference between school and home learning skills.	10. Ruth (Australia): Most of what they learn at home is in such contrast to the way we teach in school.

The 'Learner confidence' final code of *Successful students* highlights teachers' understanding that successful students are committed to understand (references 1a, 1b), have a desire to learn in school (reference 3) and enjoy learning (reference 2). Teachers also explained why some students do not succeed in learning in Traditional language communities. The 'Learner shame' final code contains references that teachers made when they were asked why some students did not do well at school. Here they spoke of a lack of independence, making students dependent on their teachers (references 4, 5). Teachers spoke about students' hesitation when making decisions in learning activities (reference 6) due to the fear of making mistakes and the shame this causes them to feel (reference 7). Instead of being active, self-motivated learners, which teachers believed was a necessary quality for successful learning, teachers said that their students were passive recipients of learning.

The 'Learning skills' final code references showed that teachers found it difficult to identify specific skills that students gained from community learning that helped them achieve successful learning at school. They were only able to identify visual skills (reference 8) and listening skills (reference 9) as useful for class learning. However, the response of Ruth (reference 10) summed up most teachers' views on this topic: the differences between school learning and community learning were significant and diverse, making it difficult for their students to apply community learning experiences in class.

Overall, most of the teachers' references on their students' contribution to successful learning were on what students were *not* able to bring to learning. These references on students' lack of self-confidence and fear of mistakes accounted for more than 90 per cent of the *Successful students* references. Only a few references identified actual learning skills from community learning that were seen as useful in school learning.

6.2.2 Successful classes

The second part of investigating Research Question 2 was to ask teachers to describe their understanding of the characteristics of a successful teacher working with students who live in Traditional language communities. As was mentioned in Section 6.1, although teachers were asked to describe successful teachers they actually described successful

class learning environments. References that fall into the *Successful classes* classifying code are included within two final codes: 'Immersion' and 'Translation'. Over 70 per cent of teachers interviewed included references for the 'Immersion' and 'Translation' final codes. Table 6.4 and Figure 6.3 illustrate this high level of participant involvement, and the similar number of references for these two *Successful classes* final codes.

Table 6.4 *Successful classes*: References made to final codes in interviews

Final code	No. of teachers /19	No. of references
Immersion	13	29
Translation	14	25
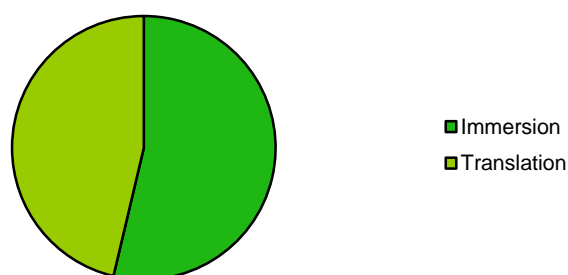
Figure 6.3 *Successful classes*: Comparison of references made to final codes in interviews

The 'Immersion' final code describes how teachers may expose their students to more English by being role models for English usage. The 'Translation' final code includes references in which teachers suggest ways that the Traditional language may be used to support understanding of concepts in English. Table 6.5 gives a selection of the main points made by teachers for these two final codes with a selection of the relevant references.

Table 6.5   Summary of interview references to the *Successful classes* final codes

Final codes	References
Immersion 1. Immersing students in English.	1a. Gracie (Australia): I think it is important that the kids are immersed in language so the kids have more of a chance to get a grasp of English. 1b. Greg (Australia): If you're learning English you need to be taught in English. It's immersion. Basic principles.
2. In all class activities students should be reading, writing and speaking English.	2. Rachael (PNG): I should try my very best to teach in English and to encourage students themselves, to whatever lessons they are taking, to read, write and speak in English. If they are giving me answers they should give it in English. If they want to raise questions they should do it also in English. If they are writing essays they should do it in good English.
3. Teachers need to be a competent model for using English.	3. Marco (Australia): I think the teacher is really important to give them actually a good model of a competent person writing English, speaking English. I think teachers are crucial because they [students] don't have other people in the family giving a good model of spoken English.
Translation 4. Difficult concepts can be explained in the Traditional Language.	4. Gracie (Australia): Generally they are Aboriginal teacher assistants in the classroom. They help you with the work that you do and they can pick up on things that you miss out on when they are speaking in language doing the teacher assistant role.
5. Brighter students or teacher assistants can explain the Traditional language.	5. John (PNG): Often I would ask the brighter students who already understood the explanation; they could explain the exercise or whatever I was explaining to the other students in their own vernacular where they could understand easier.
6. Concepts already understood in the Traditional language can be used to explain the same concept in English.	6. Samantha (PNG): Other languages as well, especially in the counting system, we use vernacular – the one that the kids are familiar with, like I would teach them and explain to them – writing the word like 'one' in English and then on the other side write the same word in Tok Ples [Traditional language], and then with some sort of symbol. Doing this they understood the work in their own vernacular and then understood very well the word in English.
7. Ultimate aim is to understand concepts in English.	7. Ilikas (PNG): So basically you explain in English the concept and then you go to Pidgin or other local language to explain the concept. Then the students are able to understand in English as you explaining again in English. So it is like, English, another language, and then you back to English and then they understand. That's it. Yes.

8. Being careful to limit the use of Traditional language to be a support in the explanation.	8. Smith (PNG): If a teacher explains something and the concept is not being understood by the kid or a number of children in the class, then the concept can be translated into the local dialect or Pidgin. Then it will make a difference. But that is only for the concept the teacher is explaining, and not going beyond that and continuing to explain things in the Tok Ples or the Pidgin.

Teachers advocated 'immersion' in English as necessary for students who live in Traditional language communities (references 1a, 1b), so that their students use English as often as possible in class – reading, writing and speaking English (reference 2). Teachers were seen as role models for the use of English as there were few, if any, adults modelling English in the Traditional language communities (reference 3). The 'Translation' references demonstrate teachers' understanding that classes may have success in learning by using the Traditional language to assist learning. At first glance, the 'Translation' references appear to contradict the 'Immersion' references by recommending the use of Traditional language rather than immersion in English. However, it was explained that the purpose of explaining in the Traditional language is always to allow the concept to be understood in English, and that the use of the Traditional language should be limited to this (reference 8). When the teachers do not speak the Traditional language, teachers thought that teacher assistants or brighter students (reference 5) could explain the concept using the Traditional language. Some teachers were able to clearly explain the process for using the Traditional language, giving examples (reference 6).

In summary, the results indicate the relative importance of the contribution of students and classes to successful learning; teachers in the interviews phase stressed the importance of the contribution of the strategies used in class rather than the students' contribution. A comparison of the number of references for *Successful students* and *Successful classes*, through the final codes that show how students and classes positively contribute to learning success, is presented in Figure 6.4. The green shades show the final codes for *Successful classes.* The blue shades represent the aspects for *Successful students.* Because Figure 6.4 illustrates the *positive* contributing factors to learning,

references for the 'Learner shame' final code are *not* included, as these indicate why students may not contribute to successful learning.
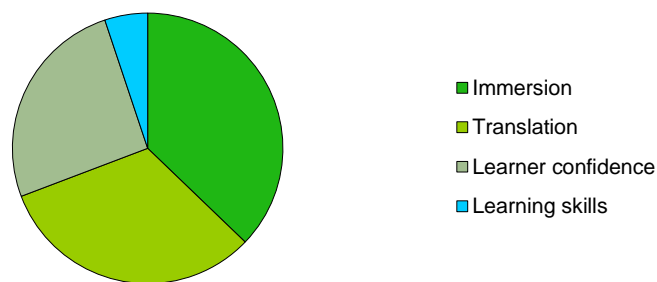
Figure 6.4   Comparison of references for *Successful students* and *Successful classes* in interviews

Figure 6.4 shows that *Successful classes* (green shades) has many more references than *Successful students* (blue shades). In their understanding of the essentials of successful learning, teachers seemed to find it far easier to identify *their* contribution to successful learning than that of their students. In addition, the 'Learner shame' final code has almost as many references as 'Learner confidence', which decreases students' confidence in taking risks in learning. Overall, results show that the teachers evaluated the actual contribution of their students to successful learning as minimal when compared to the larger contribution required by teachers in class to achieve successful learning.

6.3   Focus group results

As noted in previous chapters, focus groups occurred after the interviews in the investigation of both research questions, and their discussion was prompted by key references from the interviews. For Research Question 2, focus group references were coded using the same final codes as the interviews, which were in turn grouped within the classifying codes *Successful students* and *Successful classes*. The degree of consideration each focus group gave to each sub-question is shown in Table 6.6, which displays the number of teachers who made relevant references and the number of references made.

Table 6.6   Focus groups: Tally

Classifying code	PNG Focus Groups		Australian Teachers Focus Group		Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group		Total	
	No. of teachers /11	No. of ref'ences	No. of teachers /6	No. of ref'ences	No. of teachers /5	No. of ref'ences	No. of teachers /22	No. of ref'ences
Successful students	9	12	6	8	5	6	20	26
Successful classes	10	15	6	7	5	2	21	24

Almost all focus group members made a contribution to their group's discussion on *Successful students* and *Successful classes*. Figure 6.5 illustrates the priority that focus groups gave to each classifying code in terms of references made.
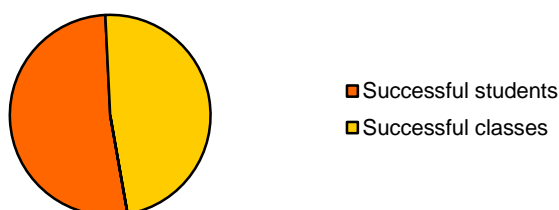
Figure 6.5   Comparison of references to *Successful students* and *Successful classes* classifying codes made by focus groups

Overall, *Successful students* and *Successful classes* received almost the same levels of attention in focus groups as they did in the interviews. In their discussions on *Successful students*, the members of the two PNG focus groups included many 'Learner shame' final code references, while their references classified as *Successful classes* contributed to both the 'Immersion' and 'Translation' final codes. The Australian Teachers Focus Group provided important references for *Successful students* (Table 6.7, references 4, 5, 6). The Aboriginal Teacher Assistants (ATA) Focus Group included references for both *Successful students* and *Successful classes: Successful students* included examples of students willing to be actively involved in learning, while *Successful classes* included

discussion on giving students experiences of English and the use of the Traditional language as a tool for understanding. Overall, the focus group references expanded on the understandings provided by the teachers' interviews, as explained in the following sections.

6.3.1 Successful students

The focus groups confirmed and added to the *Successful students* interview references by contributing new information to the 'Learner confidence', 'Learner shame' and 'Learning skills' final codes. Focus groups also introduced a new final code within *Successful students* that had not been used during interviews. The focus groups noted the potential for literacy skills in the Traditional language to be useful skills in English literacy, so a new final code – 'Literacy skills transfer' – was created for these references.

The 'Literacy skills transfer' final code outlines teachers' understanding of the potential for Traditional language literacy skills to be transferred as skills for English literacy. This final code was created after the focus groups because the transferability of literacy skills was not mentioned in the interviews. This issue was mainly discussed by the PNG focus groups. The transferability of literacy skills was an important issue for the participants in the PNG focus groups because the first three years of schooling in Papua New Guinea are in elementary schools, where the majority of teaching has been in the local Traditional language. This policy has proved to be controversial; many teachers and parents are openly critical of the policy, as they assert that teaching in Traditional language has led to the lowering of English literacy standards in primary schools. The proponents of the local language policy explain that being able to read and write in the Traditional language supports reading and writing in English, as development in English is reliant on development in the Traditional language. As noted in Chapter 2, this policy has now changed and all schooling will be in English.

A selection of references made by focus groups included in the 'Literacy skills transfer' final code, as well as in the 'Learner confidence', 'Learner shame' and 'Learning skills' final codes, are listed in Table 6.7, alongside with their main points..

Table 6.7 Summary of focus group references to the *Successful students* classifying code

Final codes	References
Learner confidence 1. Some students do show confidence in trying to use English with each other.	1a. Pam (ATA Focus Group): Kate was trying to speak in English to another Grade 7 student, Jan, who spoke better English. Kate made an English mistake and Jan corrected Kate's mistake and then Kate said it properly. Then they were hugging and laughing. 1b. Tina (ATA Focus Group): Mick, a Grade 1 student, went and lived in town for a few months. When he came back he had learned more English. In class other boys were speaking to him in the Traditional language and Mick was replying in English.
Learner shame 2. Fear of using English not only affects learning English but also hampers learning in other subjects.	2a. John (PNG Focus Group 1): This particular kid found it a bit hard to even to speak up when it is English, to answer a question in simple English. That was a problem he had too that stopped him from learning. 2b. Malbola (PNG Focus Group 1): If you ask them a question and they may have the answer in them but they do not feel like giving the answers because feel like they will not be able to speak in a way that you can understand they have fear in them. It will affect their whole learning in other learning areas as well.
3. Students know the answer but cannot explain the answer in English.	3. Rachael (PNG Focus Group 1): When giving students work in the classroom or asking questions you will see that if they are less productive students in the classroom. They know the answer but then, to put it in a simple English sentence, it is hard for them.
Learning skills 4. Students learn well in groups by working together and helping each other.	4. Mia (Australian Teachers Focus Group): One of the things they bring to school is their group work. We work as a group and they enjoy that. I think that is a skill which they bring from home.
5. Students have the skill of explaining learning to each other.	5. Bill (Australian Teachers Focus Group): In their culture, when they are back in their homes, the bigger ones must have explained to the little ones about what their parents and the older people are saying. They seem to be doing the same thing in school too. So if I speak and some of those kids do not understand my accent because it is different, the others explain, 'That is what he said'. They help themselves.
6. Students' visual skills help them identify words by their shape.	6. Kaye (Australian Teachers Focus Group): I find that [visual skill] as well. When they have got the sentences cut up and then mixed around … they know the look of the word rather than the actual. The shape, if it's got a 'g' that goes below the line or a 'h' that goes above the line.

Literacy skills transfer	
7. Structure of Traditional languages is very different from English.	7. Malbola (PNG Focus Group 1): The structure of vernacular is different from English. Knowing vernacular and English will allow people to know English well, but I don't believe it.
8. Using both Traditional language and English in class learning is confusing for students and teachers.	8. Veronica: (PNG Focus Group 1): English has its own subject rules and structures and we can't cope with that. If only one language was given at the beginning, from elementary school up to university, then it would be okay. Jumping from one to another and another, then we are all over confusing themselves and our students too. Teachers are confusing themselves, students are confusing themselves. When teachers are confused students are also confused.
9. Students may be able to transfer skills. (Opposing view)	9a. Ann (Australia Teachers Focus Group): I think if we did teach them in their own language, then they would be able to read it in their own language and then transfer it across too.
	9b. Mia (Australia Teachers Focus Group): You start off with the same skills if you are learning a language. Whatever language it is, if you are using the same skill… that home language [skill] is transferred or passed on or developed when it comes to the English side.

The Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group added to the interview references on 'Learner confidence' by explaining how students could have confidence in learning in class and not be afraid of making mistakes (reference 1a). For 'Learner shame', PNG Focus Group 1 contributed by explaining how a fear of making mistakes in English not only affects learning English but hinders student learning in other learning areas as well (reference 2a, 2b). The Australian Teachers Focus Group contributed to the 'Learning skills' final code of *Successful classes* by recognising that student group learning (reference 4) and older students helping younger students learn, as developed during community learning (reference 5), were valuable learning experiences derived from learning activities in students' communities. This was an important contribution because only a few useful learning skills from community learning were identified during the interviews.

Most of the 'Literacy skills transfer' references were made by the PNG focus groups. In these references it was asserted that because the structure of Traditional languages was very different from English (reference 7), and that constantly changing from Traditional language to English was confusing for both students and teachers

(reference 8), literacy skills were therefore not being transferred to English in the classroom. On the other hand, in Australia, two teachers thought that literacy skills could be transferred from Traditional languages to English (references 9a, 9b). However, unlike the Papua New Guinean teachers, they did not have first-hand experience of students being taught in the Traditional language.

After considering the contribution of students to successful learning, focus groups discussed the role of the class learning environment for successful learning.

6.3.2 Successful classes

Focus groups responded to a selection of references from the interviews that were part of the *Successful classes* classifying code. These included references from the 'Immersion' and 'Translation' final codes. Focus groups supported the references made during interviews, especially the idea of the teacher as a role model for the use of English. To cater for all the references made about teachers as role models, a new final code – 'Teacher models' – was created. In response to 'Immersion' references, focus groups discussed ways the English environment of the classroom could be improved. The use of the students' Traditional language to support understanding in English was discussed in the PNG focus groups, and included as part of the 'Translation' final code. Table 6.8 presents the main points on the *Successful classes* final codes that were made during focus groups, and a selection of the relevant references.

Table 6.8   Summary of focus group references to the *Successful classes* classifying code

Final codes	References
Teacher models	
1. Teachers are role models for using English.	1. Mia (Australian Teachers Focus Group): We are role models in the way we want English to be taught and written – how we read books and everything – so that the child can hopefully look up at that person too. This is role modelling in the correct way in working with English or learning about English.

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2. Students imitate their teachers in using English.	2. Paul (PNG Focus Group 2): I can see that when students come to school they imitate what the teachers are teaching them.
3. Teachers are the main hope for students using English.	3. Veronica (PNG Focus Group 1): For a child coming from a vernacular background the teacher is the only hope.
Immersion	
4. Immersion is essential for students to become competent in writing, reading and speaking.	4. Veronica (PNG Focus Group 1): I really think if the kids are going to be competent in the English in writing and reading and speaking, they need to be immersed in English … [with] resources like the reading books that we have and wall charts inside the classroom and the library. I believe these things, they also help the students to learn well, especially in English.
5. Immersion activities can include group work, guest speakers and notices.	5a. Tapi (PNG Focus Group 1): The teacher does a lot of teaching and helping students in the classroom and outside. But students can also learn from other sources too. Students can learn from their own peers in their own groups and from guest speakers that others can understand. They can also read simple notices that we put in the school area or when they see it on the newspaper.
	5b. Paul (PNG Focus Group 2): I can see that they have been speaking in English to their friends especially to solve a problem – like maths, English or science – they were discussing things in English so that is one way they have been improving. Student can go into a library in their own times where they can read books and videos showing the proper use of English.
Translation	
6. Not all teachers agree that Traditional language should be used as an aid to explanations.	6. Paul (PNG Focus Group 2): If we keep on speaking Traditional language and if we try to explain it in Traditional language they will know the thing in language but they will not know the thing in English.
7. Some students appear to be using their Traditional language to understand English concepts.	7. Pam (ATA Focus Group): When I read them stories in English and then ask questions in English they answer correctly but using the Traditional language.

In their 'Teacher models' references, focus groups supported the interview comments about the role of teachers modelling English in the way they speak, read and write (reference 1). The focus group discussion allowed teachers to clarify the understanding from the interview references of their role as users of English. This was seen to be especially useful for students in Traditional language communities as the students learn by imitating their teachers (reference 2); teachers were the main – and,

often, the only – role models for students (reference 3). During the interviews, many teachers spoke about the importance of their students being immersed in English. They explained the reason for immersion, but did not provide suggestions of immersion activities. In contrast, the focus groups did give examples of ways of immersing students in English, such as group work, where students use English with their peers; the use of guest speakers (reference 5a); and providing access to books and wall charts (reference 4).

While some focus group teachers doubted the efficacy of using Traditional language as an aid to understanding English (reference 6), another participant provided a practical example of how understanding might work. A 'Translation' reference relates the story of children listening to a story in English and then answering questions, posed in English, using their Traditional language (reference 7). There is an implication that the children could be using their own language to understand the story spoken in English. These focus group references reveal that, while the interviews mostly showed support for the use of Traditional language, this is not accepted as the understanding by all teachers.

In summary, focus groups confirmed, elaborated and added to the interview references for Research Question 2, classified as *Successful students* and *Successful classes.* They provided more information on students' contribution to successful learning by giving examples of learner confidence and identifying useful community learning activities. However, they also showed how students' fear of failure in learning not only affects their learning in English but also in all subjects. Focus group discussions on students' contribution to learning contributed some references that were put into a new final code, 'Literacy skills transfer'. In this discussion, teachers stated it was not possible to use Traditional language literacy skills as literacy skills in English. Focus groups highlighted the role of teachers as models of English use and explained how classes can contribute to successful learning by identifying possible immersion activities. There was disagreement as to whether students' Traditional language would be helpful in understanding concepts in English.

6.4   Critical group results

Three critical groups, as described in Chapters 4 and 5, participated in this study: the Teachers Critical Group, Educators Critical Group, and Academics Critical Group. Group members were invited to critique two statements derived from the interview and focus group references for Research Question 2. These statements were based on the researcher's understanding of the results at that time, and therefore are not as developed as the *Successful students* and *Successful classes* classifying codes that have been explained in the results of the interviews and focus groups. Although the terms 'Internal resources' and 'External resources' were used in the critical groups to describe, respectively, successful students and successful classes, these references were able to be classified using final codes from the *Successful students* and *Successful classes* classifying codes. The critical group statements for Research Question 2 that were presented to the critical groups are shown in Table 6.9, along with the relevant sub-question, and the classifying code in parentheses.

Table 6.9   Critical group statements

Statements	Research sub-question and classifying code
1. Students with an Indigenous language background are limited in interaction, contexts and motivation. Consequently their internal resources for learning in English are limited. Internal resources are the learning and English experience students have from learning in the community or in previous grades. Students use them in classroom learning.	2a. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student? (*Successful students*)
2. Because their resources are limited, teachers and classrooms need to build external resources to support classroom learning. External resources may include providing interaction experiences through group work and increasing motivation through creating interesting learning experiences.	2b. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher? (*Successful classes*)

Each critical group discussed the two main statements as they related to the essentials for successful learning. As will be explained in the following sections, all three groups concentrated on the contribution of classes towards successful learning, rather than the contribution of students.

6.4.1 Successful students

The main contribution of critical groups on the contribution of students to successful learning was to place the emphasis on the class learning environment – rather than the student – as responsible for achieving successful learning. Unlike the interviews and focus groups, the critical groups made few references to the responsibility of students for successful learning. The references that were made were 'Learning skills' and 'Literacy skills transfer' references. Table 6.10 lists a selection of references made for the 'Learning skills' and 'Literacy skills transfer' final codes as part of the *Successful students* classifying code, and the main points derived from the references.

Table 6.10 Summary of critical group references to the *Successful students* classifying code

Final codes and main points	References
Learning skills	
1. Students can build their English by using it in their communities.	1. Bill (Teachers Critical Group): So the need to interact is there. But it depends on the students. The students actually go back to the community and say that we have learned to speak in school so when we finish school and go back we try to speak broken English and that actually helps us to learn to speak some English.
2. Students have skills from community learning that teachers need to help them use.	2. Jan (Educators Critical Group): The internal resources as well – kids are amazing, what they have got internally, but you have to work on getting them out.
Literacy skills transfer	
3. Traditional languages have a very different structure from English which it makes it difficult for skills to transfer.	3a. Jan (Educators Critical Group): Sometimes English and some other language are similar in grammatical structure – that's easy to transfer over – but Traditional languages don't have the structure of English. Therefore to transfer that language into English is too hard.
	3b. Helen (Educators Critical Group): The adults who were in the mission school were able to write in English really, really well as well as their own language. I suppose I am passionate about bilingual education. I have seen it work.
4. Transfer of skills has been seen to work in some communities but not in others.	4. Jan (Educators Critical Group): I was in a situation where it [transferring skills] did not work and that makes a difference too.

As the references show, critical groups did not give much consideration to teachers' understanding of the role of students in successful class learning. The only *Successful students* references on student contribution to successful learning related to the need for students to be active in their use of English outside of school, as briefly mentioned in the Teachers Critical Group by Bill (reference 1). In the Educators Critical Group, the emphasis was on the need for teachers to recognise the abilities of their students (reference 2). The Educators Critical Group provided an interesting insight into the focus group discussion on whether literacy skills could be transferred, because the teachers of this critical group held opposing views. Two of the teachers noted the difficulties in the transference of literacy skills (references 3a, 4). The other participant asserted that, from her experience of bilingual schools, literacy skills could be transferred (reference 3b).

6.4.2 Successful classes

Successful classes attracted the most discussion in critical groups, involving all the teachers. Most of their discussion confirmed what was said in interviews and focus groups. The critical group participants especially highlighted the role of teachers as role models and stressed the importance of immersing students in English in class, as students were not immersed in English outside of school. Critical groups added new points for 'Immersion', and their comments created a new final code, 'Scaffolding'. The main points, along with a selection of references for 'Immersion' and 'Scaffolding', are given in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11   Summary of critical group references to the *Successful classes* classifying code

Final codes and main points	References
Immersion	
1. The aim of immersion is to provide opportunities and encouragement to use English.	1. Gail (Academics Critical Group): If schools, teachers would use a lot of motivation, provide opportunities and encouragement for children to learn and use English, [it] would make those Indigenous children learning English take it as fun and make it a little bit easier.
2. Immersion needs to be meaningful, practical and rewarding.	2. Lora (Educators Critical Group): Meaningful experiences – that's the word. See, you have got rewarding learning experiences, maybe even meaningful. Because it is far more real to them then, because they are having to actually put what they have learnt in the classroom into practice and actually having to go do it.
3. If students do not have the opportunity to interact in English then their learning will stop.	3. Jill (Academics Critical Group): Although they are coming with a lot of experiences, students are silenced. … They can also be very good learners when they are exposed to the reading and writing of the English language.
Scaffolding	4. Helen (Educators Critical Group): It's all about scaffolding learning, and it's all about when you want to teach them about polar regions, and it is beyond their cultural knowledge or understanding, you can do it as long as all the language is scaffolded and you give them the language to learn and it is taught in context.
4. Scaffolding can be used to build up the context of topics so that contexts outside of students' community experience may be learned.	
5. Introducing unfamiliar topics without building up background knowledge will not work.	5. Lora (Educators Critical Group): If topics are not done well or not done properly, or if the students are not given enough background information on topics or enough scaffolding with that, then it is pointless.

Critical group teachers advocated that for immersion to be successful it needed to be enjoyable (reference 1), rewarding and practical (reference 2), and have the central objective of promoting interaction in English between students, and between students and teachers. Jill (reference 3) makes the important point that if students do not have the opportunity to experience and interact with English, they are in effect being 'silenced' in their learning. The Educators Critical Group recommended scaffolding in response to the contention that unfamiliar learning areas make learning difficult. By integrating scaffolded learning experiences, these teachers suggested, topics outside of students' community experience can be understood (reference 4). It was pointed out that if scaffolding was not used, learning would not be successful (reference 5). In their discussion, prompted by the

two main statements, critical groups validated the references on the essential requirements of successful learning. They contributed to teachers' understanding by providing new information for some of the final codes and the creation of a new final code.

6.5 Research Question 2: Conclusion

Teachers' understanding of the requirements for the successful learning of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background is influenced by their understanding of students' English environment experience. Teachers reported that it was their understanding that students have limited English experiences of an English environment. Therefore students were perceived to bring few skills to school that were useful for class learning. This lack of English experience and students' insufficient skills led teachers to express the understanding that teachers and the class learning environment need to respond creatively so that successful learning is achieved. The understanding expressed during the interviews and focus groups was confirmed by the critical groups; even though critical group members did not have access to interviews and focus group references, their own references reflected a similar understanding of what is essential for successful learning. The results of these three phases provide a rich collection of information on teachers' understanding of how successful learning may be achieved for Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities.

The results of Research Questions 1 and 2, as presented in Chapters 5 and 6, will now be collated and organised in Chapter 7 to bring together the information gathered during the three data collection phases.

7 Collation of results: Teachers' understanding of English experience and essential requirements for successful learning

The previous two chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, presented detailed data on teachers' understanding of the extent of the English environment experienced by students in Traditional language communities, and the essential requirements for these students' successful learning. This chapter now presents the results of the researcher's further consideration of this data. During the process of collation the concept *distance* was identified as underlying the references. The classifying codes used in Chapters 5 and 6 were re-labelled to take up the overriding impact of *distance* on the participants' responses. These new labels aim to better reflect the references they contain in relation to the research questions.

7.1 Classifying codes

The results in Chapters 5 and 6 were presented using five classifying codes: *English opportunities*, *English benefits* and *Learning contrast* (Research Question 1); and *Successful students* and *Successful classes* (Research Question 2). Each of these classifying codes was formed by bundling the similar final codes for each research sub-question. In all the codes, distance could be seen as the basis for the participants' references to their students' English experience. Further, as noted in the methodology chapter (Section 4.6.1), the questions asked during the interviews as part of the Research Question 1 investigation were designed to offer teachers the freedom to respond positively as they described the extent of the English environment experienced by Indigenous students in Traditional language communities. Similarly, questions concerning Research Question 2, based on the two sub-questions, were intended to generate comments on positive contributions, rather than the negative or limited contributions of students and teachers to successful learning. By encouraging teachers to identify positive experiences of the English environment, the researcher met the aim

of not leading teachers towards negative responses during the data collection phases. This achieved validity for the study, as explained in Section 4.6.

In spite of this encouragement to identify positive English environment experiences, positive descriptions of the English environment were few. As the research progressed, teachers' references mainly described the extent of the English environment as limited, offering few opportunities for interaction, minimal benefits and a class learning context very different from community learning. These descriptions of an English environment that is limited, minimal and very different from the community language and learning context are shown in later chapters as expressions of distance. Opportunities to experience English can be understood to be distant from students, realisable benefits are distant from their lives and the English learning environment is distant from the community learning environment. This study contends that the data points to these descriptions as the consequence of students' experience of a distant English environment. To foreground the nature of this distant experience, the classifying codes for Research Question 1 have been re-labelled.

For Research Question 2, the collated results of the three data collection phases that describe the contributions of students and classes to successful learning can be seen to emphasise the learning resources that are provided. Again, although teachers were encouraged to identify positive contributions by students, the teachers' references implied that it was the students themselves who did not have the resources for successful learning. In this context, it was understood there was an increased responsibility for the class teachers to provide resources to compensate for the limited student resources. This consolidation of the results meant that the classifying codes for Research Question 2 have been re-labelled to foreground what resources the students do have and how the class environment may contribute to successful learning.

7.1.1 Research Question 1: Renaming codes to capture data focus

In Chapter 5, the data presented within the *English opportunities* classifying code revealed evidence of teachers' understanding that their students had very few opportunities to interact with English in their daily lives. The emphasis on interaction suggested that *Interaction distance* was an appropriate and representative classifying

code to blend the emphases in these results. The *English benefits* results showed that teachers found it difficult to identify many benefits that could be attained by their students in the present and in the future. The English environment did not have a strong enough presence to provide benefits, thus the potential for benefits could be said to be 'distant'. Therefore the code *Benefits distance* was selected to represent these results. The *Learning contrast* results revealed teachers' understanding that the learning context of a class based on an English environment was distant from the learning context of a community based on a Traditional language environment. This distance of learning contexts makes *Context distance* a suitable code name. Table 7.1 summarises the re-labelling classifying codes for Research Question 1 and sub-questions.

Table 7.1   Research Question 1: Renamed codes

Research Question 1 sub-question	Original classifying code	Renamed code
1a. What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English?	English opportunities	Interaction distance
1b. What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English?	English benefits	Benefits distance
1c. What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning?	Learning contrast	Context distance

Renaming these codes better reflects the consolidated information contained in the final codes, which are the evidence for the results in Chapters 5 and 6. As noted above, the need for re-labelling was not apparent until the results of the three data phases were collated. Each of these renamed codes is described in Section 7.4.

7.1.2 Research Question 2: Renaming codes to capture data focus

To achieve a focus on the resources that students and classes contribute to successful learning, it was appropriate to re-label *Successful students* as *Student resources* and *Successful classes* to *Class resources.* The renamed code *Student resources* helps to identify teachers' understanding of the learning resources students may bring to class learning from their prior learning experiences, and the limitations of these resources.

Class resources enables a focus on teachers' understanding of the class learning resources that classes need to provide for successful learning. Table 7.2 shows the change of classifying code names for Research Question 2.

Table 7.2   Research Question 2: Renamed codes

Research Question 2 sub-question	Original classifying code	Renamed code
2a. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student?	Successful students	Student resources
2b. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher?	Successful classes	Class resources

In essence, the renamed codes capture the meanings in teachers' understanding of the two research questions coherently across the various references: first, as a recognition that distance is experienced by their students in terms of their *interaction* with and *benefits* from English, and in the contrasting *context* distance of the class learning environment from community learning; and second, in the assessment and identification of the *student resources* and *class resources* that need to be deployed for successful learning when students experience a distant English environment.

7.2   Distance and resources: Results summary

The extent to which teachers in the three phases of the study contributed to each research question and its sub-questions can be shown by the number of relevant references and the percentages of references given for each question. Table 7.3 shows the number of references for each research question and sub-questions.

Table 7.3   Research questions: Total references in all data phases

Research questions	References	References as % of total
1. What do teachers understand is the extent of the English environment that their Indigenous Traditional language students experience?	196	68
1a. What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English? (*Interaction distance*)	96	33

1b. What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English? (*Benefits distance*)	53	18
1c. What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning? (*Context distance*)	47	16
2. What do teachers understand are the essentials of successful learning for students who experience this extent of the English environment?	93	32
2a. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student? (*Student resources*)	39	13
2b. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher? (*Class resources*)	54	19

As can be seen in the first four rows of Table 7.3, for Research Question 1 teachers gave almost as many references for *Interaction distance* (96) as for *Benefits distance* (53) and *Context distance* (47) combined (100). Therefore *Interaction distance* is the most important source of references for teachers' understanding of the influence of distance in the English environment. For Research Question 2, teachers were able to provide more relevant references for *Class resources* (54) than *Student resources* (39). The more numerous *Class resources* references infer that teachers better understand the resources that classes may provide for successful learning than the resources that students may contribute. These same results are reconfigured into a pie graph to visually display the proportions of references. Figure 7.1 compares the proportion of references for each research question.
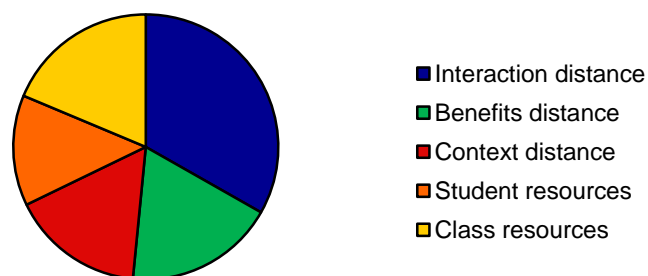
Figure 7.1   Proportion of references to renamed codes in all data phases

Figure 7.1 demonstrates that Research Question 1 (blue shades) has a far greater proportion of references than Research Question 2 (orange shades). Teachers shared their understanding of their students' experience of the English environment more

often than their understanding of the contribution of students and classes to successful learning. Teachers appeared to have more knowledge about the reality of their students' English experience than they did about possible responses to that reality that could achieve successful learning.

7.2.1   Comparison of interviews, focus groups and critical groups

Overall, the interview, focus group and critical group phases of data collection provided consistent information on teachers' understanding of the English environment distance experienced by students in Traditional language communities and the requirements for their successful learning. What did vary in the three phases of data collection was the prominence that participants gave to the different sub-questions and their classifying codes. For example, as displayed in Figure 7.2 below, in their descriptions of the English environment for Research Question 1, teachers in the interviews provided more references for *Interaction distance* than they did for *Benefits distance* and *Context distance* combined. However, the focus and critical groups gave similar amounts of *Interaction distance* and *Benefits distance* references. Figure 7.2 compares the number of references to each code during each data phase.
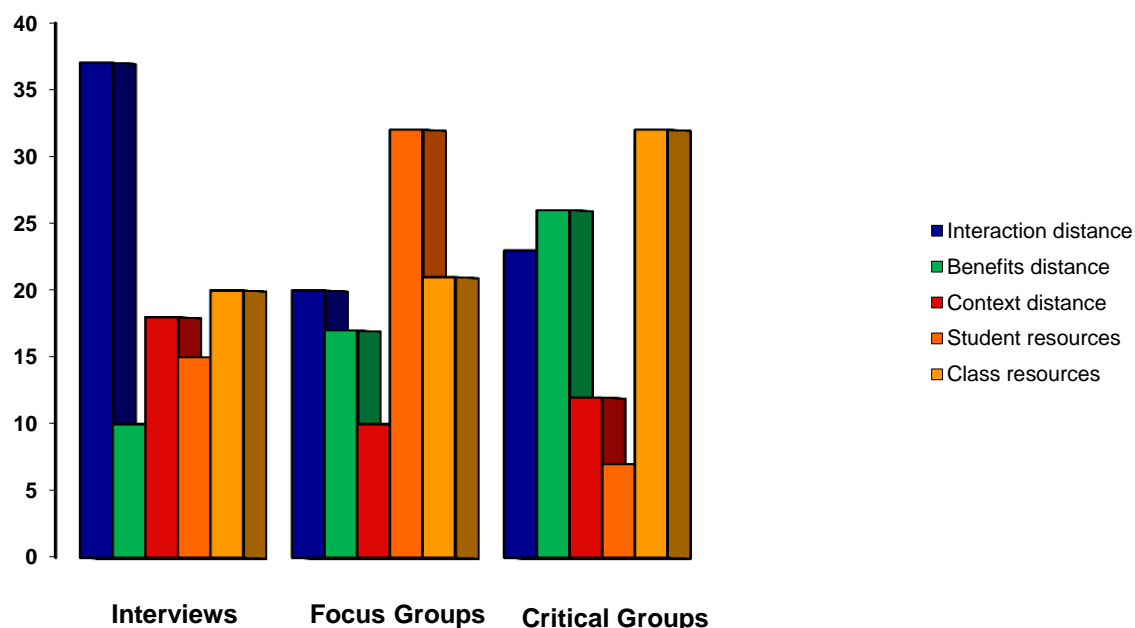
Figure 7.2   Comparison of references to codes in the three data phases

Figure 7.2 displays the range of different emphases given by the different groups. The interviews placed greatest emphasis on *Interaction distance*, focus groups on *Student resources* and critical groups on *Class resources*. For Research Question 1, the interviews and focus groups provided more references on *Interaction distance* as the basis for understanding the English environment experienced by students, while critical groups had more discussion on *Benefits distance.* For Research Question 2, focus groups provided more references on *Student resources*, while interviews and critical groups provided more information on *Class resources.* Because the different phases concentrated on different areas of the research questions, together they provide a rich array of references for the results of Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

7.3   Research Question 1: Results summary

The diverse range of references provided by the interviews, focus groups and critical groups offered new insights into the initial analysis. When the classifying codes for

Research Question 1 are renamed and applied across the references, the profound effect of distance is foregrounded.

The first code, *Interaction distance*, contains references for sub-question 1a, which examines teachers' understanding of the opportunities students have to interact with English in their daily lives – that is, in their communities and at school. Table 7.4 shows the information gathered during each data phase that gave rise to the *Interaction distance* code, with a column for each of the relevant final codes 'English exposure', 'Traditional language' and 'Student comparison'. All the relevant information from the interviews is included. Rather than repeat similar information already mentioned during the interviews, only new information gathered during focus groups and critical groups is included. Thus Table 7.4 is a summary of the results for Research Question 1.

Table 7.4 *Interaction distance*: Summary of results within final codes

English exposure	Traditional language	Student comparison
INTERVIEWS (Table 5.1)	**INTERVIEWS (Table 5.2)**	**INTERVIEWS (Table 5.3)**
School	**School**	**School**
▪ English used when students are speaking to the teacher.	▪ Students mainly use their Traditional language in and out of class with their peers.	▪ Urban students show higher literacy skills in school.
▪ Occasionally used when speaking to their peers in class.	▪ Students do not use their Traditional language when speaking to their teachers.	**Community**
▪ English rarely used out of class during recess times.	▪ Traditional language at school hinders English learning at school.	▪ Urban students are more likely to have family members who use English.
▪ Students only use small phrases and simple sentences.	**Community**	▪ Urban students have more access to reading materials and English users.
Community	▪ Students mostly use their Traditional language in the community.	
▪ English is rarely heard.	▪ Students occasionally use a Creole or an English dialect when speaking with other Indigenous people who do not speak their language.	
▪ Very few opportunities to speak with English speakers.	**Importance**	
▪ Minimal evidence of written texts.	▪ Traditional language belongs to them.	
Proximity	▪ Traditional language is their natural language.	
▪ Students are alienated from English.	▪ Traditional language is the language for understanding.	
▪ English is distant and far.		
▪ English is an isolated and foreign language.		
▪ The English-speaking environment is too far.		
FOCUS GROUPS (Table 5.12)	**FOCUS GROUPS (Table 5.12)**	**FOCUS GROUPS (Table 5.12)**
▪ Students only use English when with non-Indigenous people.	▪ Students grow up in their Traditional language.	▪ Urban students need English.
	▪ English is a strange language.	▪ Creole students experience more English.
	▪ English is expensive.	▪ The similarities between Creoles and English help students using English.
	▪ English is not known to be a language to some new students beginning school.	▪ English may be a common language for urban students.
		▪ Urban students are more willing and ready to use English.

CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 5.17)	CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 5.17)	CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 5.17)
▪ English is a confronting, foreign language. ▪ Students do not have the need or opportunity to learn in English outside of school.	Although English is the language chosen for the school it is not the language of choice for the community.	Creole-speaking students living in Traditional language communities do better in class.

The second code, *Benefits distance*, brings together references for research sub-question 1b – that is, teachers' understanding of the extent to which students benefit from their use of English in the present and future. *Benefits distance* is described by the final codes 'School benefits', 'Community benefits' and 'Future benefits'. Table 7.5 shows a summary of the results provided for *Benefits distance* from each data collection phase. Note that all the relevant information from the interviews is given but only *new* information is presented for focus and critical groups in this table.

Table 7.5   *Benefits distance*: Summary of results within final codes

School benefits	Community benefits	Future benefits
INTERVIEWS (Table 5.4) **Benefits** ▪ Reading and writing at school. ▪ Learning subjects through English. ▪ All learning materials are in English. **Limitations** ▪ Fear and shame of making mistakes in English. ▪ Limited time at school. ▪ Holidays are disruptions to learning. ▪ It is tiring for students learning in a language that is not theirs.	**INTERVIEWS (Table 5.5)** ▪ Using English when shopping. ▪ Reading labels and signs. ▪ Speaking to visitors and teachers. ▪ Television and newspapers. **Limitations** ▪ Few opportunities to use English in the community. ▪ Minimal or no reading materials at home. ▪ English has limited useful applications.	**INTERVIEWS (Table 5.6)** **Benefits** ▪ Gaining a better standard of living. ▪ Enabling engagement in the wider community. ▪ Writing letters. ▪ Being informed about news. ▪ Employment and further education. **Limitations** ▪ Limited further education opportunities or productive uses of English. ▪ Limited employment options. ▪ Students may find it more difficult to adapt to community life than people who did not go to school at all.

FOCUS GROUPS (Table 5.13)	FOCUS GROUPS	FOCUS GROUPS
▪ Students' experience of only one place discourages them from expressing themselves. ▪ Students are not confident because they find English difficult. ▪ Students are confused by their teacher's English, which they do not understand. ▪ Students cannot see the purpose of education in English as they observe community life.	▪ No discussion.	▪ No discussion.
CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 5.18)	CRITICAL GROUPS	CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 5.18)
▪ Motivating students is the responsibility of all those involved in students' learning. ▪ A student may have understanding but their limited vocabulary prevents them from expressing their understanding. ▪ English vocabulary is difficult as there is no connection with Traditional language as there is with Creoles or English dialects.	▪ No discussion.	Children may not be motivated like adults to value English for its use in future employment and education.

The third code, *Context distance*, includes teachers' responses that relate to their understanding of the contrasting contexts of school learning and community learning. *Context distance* is described by the 'Learning activities', 'Learning area' and 'Home support' final codes. Table 7.6 contains these final code descriptions derived from the references for each of the data collection phases. All the relevant information from the interviews is included but only new information from the focus and critical groups is given.

Table 7.6   *Context distance*: Summary of results within final codes

Learning activities	Learning area	Home support
INTERVIEWS (Table 5.8) **School** ▪ Formal school learning. ▪ Controlled learning. ▪ Listening. ▪ Teacher-directed. ▪ Sitting and writing. ▪ Students find it difficult to adapt to school learning. **Community** ▪ Informal learning. ▪ Shared learning. ▪ Child-directed learning. ▪ Group learning with peers. ▪ Discovery learning. ▪ Independent learning. ▪ Learning through stories.	**INTERVIEWS** ▪ No discussion.	**INTERVIEWS** **(Table 5.9)** **Expectations** ▪ Family supporting the school's goals and aims. ▪ Educated parents. ▪ Reading at home. ▪ A suitable learning environment at home. **Reality** ▪ Students are not prepared for school. ▪ Students are unfamiliar with school rules. ▪ Students lack a home reading and writing model. ▪ Limited parental involvement in school.
FOCUS GROUPS **(Table 5.14)** School learning contrasts with community learning through: ▪ Unfamiliar learning rules. ▪ Using different learning materials. ▪ Having less experiential learning. ▪ Teacher-directed instruction.	**FOCUS GROUPS** **(Table 5.14)** School may create learning contrast by: ▪ Students learning topics not experienced in community life. ▪ Students facing the double challenge of learning unfamiliar topics and unfamiliar English.	**FOCUS GROUPS** **(Table 5.14)** ▪ Parents need to encourage their children to read and write at home. ▪ Parents need to provide learning materials for reading and writing. ▪ Children need good health and nutrition. ▪ Children need to see adults in their community achieving in work and learning because of their education. ▪ Parents need to support and encourage their children.

CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 5.19)	CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 5.19)	CRITICAL GROUPS
- The many differences between school and home learning means that students will take time to adapt. - The contrast of learning activities may result in students being forced to learn in unfamiliar ways.	Learning contrast could be reduced by basing learning on the local environment as this will be easier for students to learn.	No discussion.

Evidence for teachers' understanding of distance emerges from results presented in the tables above. The three codes *Interaction distance*, *Benefits distance* and *Context distance* are described by the final codes above and reveal the depth of teachers' understanding of their students' experience of the extent of the English environment.

To highlight the notion of distance that emerged from teachers' understanding, the term 'English as a Distant Language' or 'EDL' will now be used in this study to describe the English language experience of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background. These students will be referred to as 'EDL students'. English as a Distant Language represents the results better than the present terms of English as an Additional Language (EAL) or English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), as these understandings do not include a consideration of distance.

The overall results of Research Question 2 are now considered.

7.4   Research Question 2: Results summary

The second research question endeavoured to explore teachers' understanding of the essential requirements required for successful learning for EDL students living in Traditional language communities. As explained in Section 7.1.2, the codes *Student resources* and *Class resources* are now used to highlight the learning resources essential for successful learning.

The first code, *Student resources*, classifies references in which teachers describe the learning resources that students may contribute to successful class learning, and the

limitations of those resources. The *Student resources* references are described by the final codes 'Learner confidence', 'Learner shame', 'Learning skills' and 'Literacy skills transfer'. The information derived from the data collection phases is listed in Table 7.7 for each of the *Student resources* final codes. As the two codes 'Learner confidence' and 'Learner shame' were closely linked in the data references (see Chapter 6, Table 6.3) they are presented together in column 1, with 'Learning skills' in column 2 and 'Literacy skills transfer' in column 3.

Table 7.7   *Student resources*: Summary of results within final codes

Learner confidence/Learner shame	Learning skills	Literacy skills transfer
INTERVIEWS (Table 6.3) **Learner confidence** ▪ Willingness and self-determination to learn. ▪ Ability to enjoy learning. ▪ A drive to discover through learning. **Learner shame** ▪ Passive dependence on the teacher. ▪ Lack of confidence to take initiative. ▪ Unwillingness to take risks in learning. ▪ Fear and shame of making mistakes.	**INTERVIEWS (Table 6.3)** ▪ Good visual skills. ▪ An ability to listen carefully. ▪ A great difference between school and home learning skills.	**INTERVIEWS** ▪ No discussion.
FOCUS GROUPS (Table 6.7) **Learner confidence** ▪ Some students do show confidence in trying to use English with each other. **Learner shame** ▪ Fear of using English not only affects learning English but also hampers learning in other subjects. ▪ Students know the answer but cannot explain the answer in English.	**FOCUS GROUPS (Table 6.7)** ▪ Students learn well in groups by working together and helping each other. ▪ Students have the skill of explaining learning to each other. ▪ Students' visual skills help them identify words by their shape.	**FOCUS GROUPS (Table 6.7)** ▪ Structure of Traditional languages is very different from that of English. ▪ Using both Traditional language and English in class learning is confusing for students and teachers. ▪ Students may be able to transfer skills. (Opposing view)

CRITICAL GROUPS No discussion.	CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 6.10) - Students have skills from community learning that teachers need to help them use. - Students can build their English by using it in their communities.	CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 6.10) - Traditional languages have a very different structure from English which makes it difficult for skills to transfer. - Transfer of skills has been seen to work in some communities but not in others.

Participating teachers described student confidence and experiences of visual, oral and group learning as resources that students may develop from their community learning that may be utilised in class learning. However, they also saw learner shame as possibly discouraging students from taking risks in learning. Focus and critical groups discussed the possibility of Traditional language literacy skills being useful for English literacy but generally considered these Traditional language literacy skills to not be useful in class.

The second code, *Class resources*, is described by the final codes 'Teacher models', 'Immersion', 'Translation' and 'Scaffolding'. The results derived from the final codes' references across the three phrases of data collection are presented in Table 7.8. 'Teacher models' and 'Immersion' are shown in column 1, as they were often mentioned together by teachers, with 'Translation' in column 2 and 'Scaffolding' in column 3.

Table 7.8 *Class resources*: Summary of results within final codes

Teacher models/Immersion	Translation	Scaffolding
INTERVIEWS (Table 6.5) **Teacher models** ▪ Teachers need be competent role models for using English. **Immersion** ▪ Immersing students in English. ▪ In all class activities students should be reading, writing and speaking English.	**INTERVIEWS (Table 6.5)** ▪ Concepts already understood in the Traditional Language can be used to explain the same concept in English. ▪ Ultimate aim is understanding concepts in English. ▪ Being careful to limit the use of Traditional language to be a support in the explanation.	**INTERVIEWS** ▪ No discussion.
FOCUS GROUPS (Table 6.8) **Teacher models** ▪ Students imitate their teachers in using English. ▪ Teachers are the main hope for students using English. **Immersion** ▪ Immersion activities can include group work, guest speakers, and providing written texts and videos.	**FOCUS GROUPS (Table 6.8)** ▪ Not all teachers agree that Traditional language should be used as an aid to explanations. ▪ Some students appear to be using their Traditional language to understand English concepts.	**FOCUS GROUPS** ▪ No discussion.
CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 6.11) ▪ Immersion aims to provide opportunities and encouragement to use English. ▪ Immersion needs to be enjoyable, practical and rewarding. ▪ Students need to have opportunities to interact in English or their learning will stop.	**CRITICAL GROUPS** ▪ No discussion.	**CRITICAL GROUPS (Table 6.11)** ▪ Scaffolding builds up topics' context so unfamiliar topics may be learned. ▪ Scaffolding language structure ▪ Introducing unfamiliar topics without building up background knowledge will not work.

The finals codes of the second research question also show evidence of
Interaction, Benefits and *Context* as seen in the first research question final codes.
Student resources final codes 'Learner confidence' and 'Learner shame' show evidence

of *Benefits*. The *Class resources* final codes 'Teacher models', 'Immersion' and 'Scaffolding' show *Interaction*, and 'Translation' shows *Context*.

Different data phases demonstrated different emphases on what the teachers thought was important. Teachers in all three data phases highlighted the importance of immersion and teachers' modelling of English. The use of the Traditional language as way of translating English sparked discussion during the focus groups. However the only groups who mentioned scaffolding as both a resource to provide learning support for unfamiliar topics outside of students' community experience and for supporting language teaching were critical groups.

7.5   Conclusion

When asked to describe the English environment experience of students living in Traditional language environments, teachers readily described an English environment more absent than present in students' lives. The spontaneity and detail of the responses showed that all teachers had already reflected at length on the reality that English was missing from students' lives. Without hesitation they described the English environment as limited, not only in students' communities but also in their schools as well. Teachers easily described the impact a limited English environment had on student resources and the necessary class resources for students to experience learning success in English.

This chapter is a consolidation of the results from Chapters 5 and 6, and provides evidence for a new perspective from which to consider the English experience and essential requirements for the successful learning of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background. Understanding these students as English as a Distant Language (EDL) students is grounded in the evidence presented and reconfigured across the three results chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). The information derived from the interviews, focus groups and critical groups offers detailed insights that may be used to develop a fuller understanding of the extent of the English experience of EDL students and the learning resources required for successful learning.

The discussion in Chapter 8 will use these results, now synthesised into five sets of codes, to determine the main elements of teachers' understanding. In Chapter 9,

these insights into the results will be used to propose an integrated framework for teachers' understanding of EDL students.

8 English as a Distant Language: Elements for understanding

During this study teachers provided their insights into, one, their understanding of the English environment experienced by students, and two, the essentials for successful learning. Chapters 5 and 6 presented these findings as sets of results from the interviews, focus groups and critical groups. During the research process, the researcher recognised that, while some teachers had similar understandings, there was no collective understanding that brought together all these fragmented and incomplete understandings. Chapter 7 brought together these understandings from the three data collection phases. As teachers' understandings of students' experience of the English environment were further explored, it became evident that they understood students in Traditional language communities to experience an English environment that was distant. A new term, 'English as a Distant Language' (EDL), was chosen as an apt term to reflect teachers' conversations on students' experience of the English environment and the essential elements for their successful learning. Accordingly, as introduced in Chapter 7, Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities will be referred to as 'English as a Distant Language students' or 'EDL students' for the remainder of this thesis.

EDL is a significant construct because it enhances understanding of the English experience of students living in Traditional language communities in a way not previously recognised. The literature review (Chapter 3) shows that there is little extant research that provides a complete understanding of the English environment experience and the requirements of successful learning in this setting. Nor does the literature review provide information on the fundamental role that distance, per se, plays in teachers' understanding, as revealed by this study. The literature review did note the contrast of school and home learning contexts (Section 3.3) and the importance of contextualising literacy (Section 3.3.3). However, very few studies that explore Indigenous students' interaction with English in Traditional language communities, as this one does, are mentioned in the literature, and there are none that explore the benefits of English that emerged from the data in this study. This lack of an overall understanding of the

significance of distance and its connected elements for EDL students' learning success reveals a momentous gap in teachers' understanding. The discussion in this chapter highlights the critical importance of EDL as a construct for these teachers' understanding of their students.

It is insufficient, however, to categorise students with a Traditional language background as 'EDL students' without examining what such a construct entails. As the results have led to the articulation of this idea of English as a Distant Language, it is necessary to now clarify this term. How does it define students' English experience and their successful learning? How can the characteristics of the EDL construct be explained coherently and cohesively? This chapter will discuss these questions using information gleaned primarily from the study results; however, the literature also makes an important contribution to the understanding developed during this discussion.

8.1   Themes

The consideration of the classifying codes for Research Question 1 led to the renaming of three codes as 'Interaction distance', 'Benefits distance' and 'Context distance'. The classifying epithets of *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context* are the main ideas on which the study references around 'distance' appear to be based. . As defined in Section 4.10, these main ideas are signifiers of the overriding impacts on distance and are named as the predominating 'themes': the *Interaction* theme examines EDL students' interaction with the English environment, the *Benefits* theme identifies the benefits that EDL students may gain using English, and the *Context* theme explores the relationship between school and community learning contexts. These three themes are also seen in the results of Research Question 2. Further, while the literature review did note a number of references that contained the themes of *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context,* this study's results did not reflect the same emphases found in the literature.

The salient differences between the emphases in this study and in the literature are shown in Figure 8.1. In this figure, the number of references made to each theme in this study is contrasted with the number of references found during the literature research.

a. Study references   b. Literature references
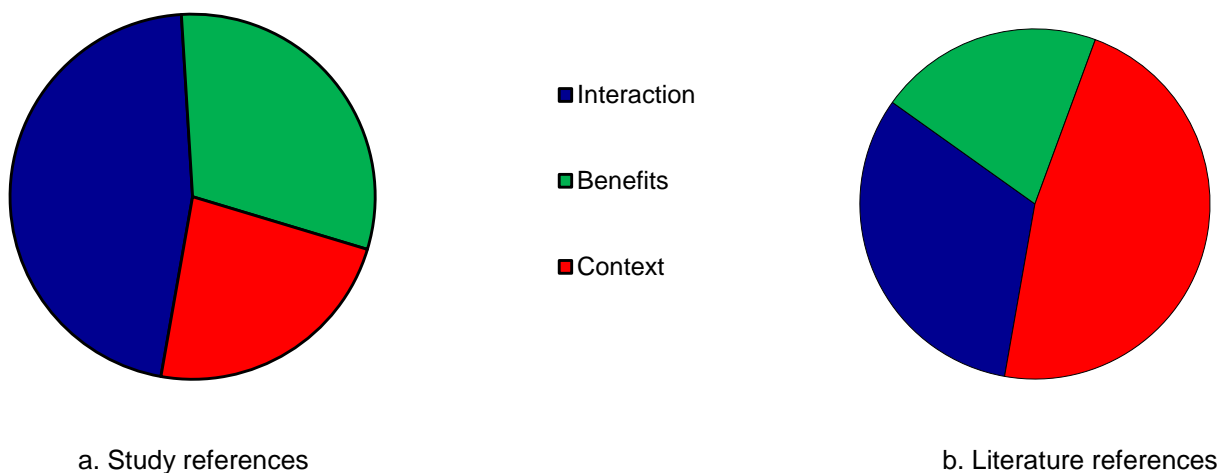
Figure 8.1   Comparison of themes in this study and in the literature

When the graphs' information is compared, this study's results (Graph a) promote *Interaction* as the most important theme. On the other hand, the literature (Graph b) stresses *Context*, with *Interaction* the least mentioned theme. The literature's emphasis on *Context* is seen in both Papua New Guinea (Faraclas, 1997; Heath & Grant, 2000) and Australia (Beresford & Gray, 2006; Rennie, 2006), where the difference between the life context and school context of Indigenous students is highlighted as the significant issue for these students' literacy learning. The literature review references are the result of an extensive literature search and, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, are representative of the existing literature.

There are several reasons for the difference in emphasis between the literature and this study. One reason for the difference is that the literature search revealed many articles that considered Indigenous students as one generalised group, regardless of their language background (see Section 3.3). Very few references could be found that specifically considered Traditional language communities (Kral, 2009; McKeown, 2003; Muhlhausler, 1996a). Further complexities arise here: while *Interaction* is the most significant issue for EDL students, it may not be as significant for Indigenous students with a Creole or English dialect background. The English environment probably provides a closer interaction for these students, so interaction is already part of their English environment. The relevance and import of this study's specific focus on Indigenous students with a Traditional language background (see Chapter 2) rather than Indigenous students per se is apparent: the study has brought to light a new way of looking at what

impacts on these students' experiences of the English environment and on their learning success.

The *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context* themes will now be used to analyse the results of each research question and the literature review to develop elements for understanding EDL. This discussion and analysis develops three elements of teachers' understanding for each theme. *Elements*, as defined in Section 4.10, are units of understanding derived from using the themes to analyse the results and the literature. The first element for each theme considers EDL students' experience of the English environment, the second element examines students' abilities from community learning, and the third element determines learning support needs for students. Fine-grained descriptions of the elements were detailed in the final codes presented in the results chapters (Chapters 5 and 6). The information in these final codes and from the literature review was used to form aspects of each element. *Aspects* describe the elements and are developed from the codes and the research literature. These elements and their aspects help to build the understanding of EDL primarily from the study results. The literature was then researched to find any relevant information that added more detail to this understanding.

8.2 *Interaction* theme

Interaction emerged as the strongest theme in teachers' responses as they described EDL (Figure 8.1). *Interaction* concerns how EDL students interact with English in their communities and at school. The relationships between the reference data indicate a line of development for teachers' understanding of *Interaction*. Participant responses were analysed to reveal three elements of *Interaction*. These elements of teachers' understanding were of, EDL students' experience of the English environment (*Interaction distance*), the learning resources students develop in community learning (*Student interaction*) and the resources they require for successful school learning (*Class interaction*). Each of these *Interaction* elements will now be discussed.

8.2.1   English interaction: Missing in action

The main group of references that were part of the *Interaction* theme described the EDL students' experience of an English environment that appears to be absent and inactive. These references underpin the study. This understanding is of a missing, inactive, distant English environment that provides very few opportunities for interaction with English. *Interaction distance* captures understandings from the teachers' references and the literature (see Appendix 11 for details of these understandings). *Interaction distance* is chosen as the appropriate term because English interaction opportunities are distant from the lives of EDL students. Only a few studies have previously investigated the English interaction of students living in Traditional language communities. Combining the results of the study and the literature is an attempt to explain *Interaction distance* more fully as a means of enhancing teachers' understanding of EDL students' experience of a distant English environment.

In the results of the study, all participant references concerned with the low levels of English activity were classified as English opportunities (Sections 5.2.1, 5.3.4, 5.4.1). In Chapter 7's discussion, these references were reclassified by the element, *Interaction distance* in order to highlight their contribution to an understanding of the impact of English environment distance on EDL students. As a means of explaining *Interaction distance*, these references are further refined into the three *aspects* of 'English exposure', 'Traditional language' and 'Student comparison'. These aspects are essential to a deeper understanding of the nature of what is 'missing in action' that forms teachers' understanding of *Interaction distance.* These three aspects of *Interaction distance* are presented in Figure 8.2.
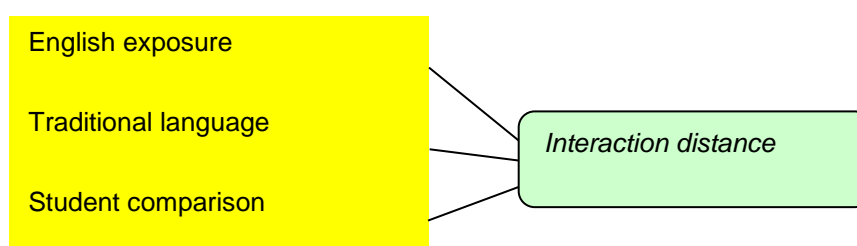
Figure 8.2   Aspects of the *Interaction distance* element

'English exposure', the first aspect of *Interaction distance*, groups together the many references made by teachers on the incidence of English in the lives of EDL students, and describes the level at which EDL students experience English in their community and at school. In the community, for example, all the participating teachers explained there was minimal incidence of the use of English in oral or written forms in the community (Tables 5.1, 5.12, 5.17). From this data, 'English exposure' is best described as an English environment *that does not exist* in EDL students' community environments, or, at best, one that is insignificant in their lives. The review of the literature found few mentions of the extent that Indigenous students experience English in Traditional language communities. Kral (2009), for example, reported that students in remote Indigenous communities have few opportunities to experience English in their daily lives. Other less recent articles are consistent with this finding; Muhlhausler (1996a) for Australia and McKeown (2003) for Papua New Guinea report that Indigenous students in Traditional language communities had minimal exposure to oral or written Englsih. The minimal previous research indicates consistency with this study's results.

Given this minimal incidence of the use of English in oral or written forms in the community, it could be assumed that more English exposure would occur in the school environment. However, the data shows that even at school teachers contend there is minimal evidence of English experience (Tables 5.1, 5.12). No literature was found that reported specifically on the level of English used in schools with students from a Traditional language background. The 'English exposure' aspect, therefore, reveals that in both the community and school environments, teachers inferred an understanding that English is by no means the significant language but, rather, that it plays a minor role in the EDL student's language environment in the community and at school. Consequently minimal English exposure contributes to a definition of *Interaction distance* element that forms the construct 'English as a Distant Language'.

'Traditional language', as a second aspect of *Interaction distance*, highlights how the dominance of the Traditional language in EDL students' daily lives limits interaction in English. The analysis of the results (Tables 5.2, 5.12, 5.17) revealed that not only was the Traditional language the preferred language for communication, but when the Traditional language could not be used a Creole or English dialect was spoken, rather than the English

taught at school. English used at school had little to do with communication in EDL students' lives. This dominance of Traditional language has been reported previously for some Indigenous communities in Australia (Butcher, 2008; Cross, 2009; Gray & Beresford, 2008; McKeown, 2003) and many communities in Papua New Guinea (Cleverley, 2007; Heath & Grant, 2000; Pickford, 2003). The interdependence of this Traditional language aspect of *Interaction distance* and minimal English exposure is apparent. The strength of the Traditional language environment is congruent with a weak English exposure environment and provides few English interaction experiences in the community and at school. The dominance of the Traditional language becomes another contribution to deeper understanding of *Interaction distance.*

A third aspect, 'Student comparison', informs teachers' understanding of the *Interaction distance* element by assessing EDL students' interaction with English compared to that of Indigenous students living in urban areas. There appears to be very little research comparing Indigenous students living in a village with urban Creole students. One study found that the village students experienced less English and consequently had lower English literacy than the urban students (Hopkins et al., 2005). This result is consistent with teachers' references in the present study. They reported that urban Indigenous students experienced higher levels of English interaction because there is more English activity in an urban environment. The influence of English is present both where they live and within their home language (Tables 5.3, 5.12, 5.17), as urban Indigenous students' English dialects or Creoles contain features of English that assist the students with learning in English. This influence is 'missing in action' with EDL students, who interact in Traditional language most of the time. The distinct nature of EDL students' experience of interaction with English is revealed by the comparison with urban students. EDL students cannot be assumed to have levels of English interaction similar to those of other Indigenous students.

The importance of *Interaction distance* to an understanding of the distance of the English environment experienced by EDL students is accentuated by the presumption in the literature that the English environment regularly interacts with EAL students (Cummins, 2008). For example, Indigenous students and other EAL students in Australia are assumed to have regular interaction with the English environment (Australian

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Education Council, 2001). However, teachers reported that EDL students do not have regular interaction with the English environment and in fact experience low levels of English interaction. A visual representation makes this relationship very clear, as illustrated in Figure 8.3.

Interaction distance

EDL student		English exposure	Traditional language dominance	Student comparison		English environment distance
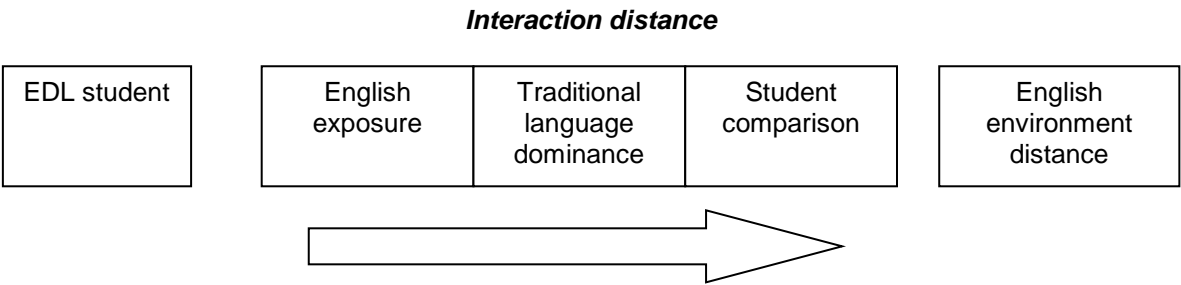
Figure 8.3   *Interaction distance* aspects contributing to English environment distance

Teachers' understanding of *Interaction distance* was articulated through its three aspects. These three aspects of *Interaction distance* lead to the student's experience of English environment distance, as the arrow indicates in Figure 8.3. When the results of the three data phases are combined, the sum of references goes well beyond other studies in highlighting and detailing the importance of interaction for teachers' understanding of their EDL students' English environment experience. This makes *Interaction distance* central to understanding English environment distance. In summary, the acknowledgement of these three aspects – 'English exposure', 'Traditional language' and 'Student comparison' – helps to define the extent of *Interaction distance* and understand more thoroughly its large contribution to teachers' understanding of their students' experience of a distant English environment.

The second element within the *Interaction* theme, which focuses on students' ability to interact in English, is discussed next.

8.2.2 Student interaction: Ready or not?

References in the study that have an *Interaction* theme include those that consider how EDL students develop an ability to interact in English during their out-of-class time. The

Student interaction element draws on these references from the results of Research Question 2 and determines the interaction abilities that EDL students have developed from prior English interactions outside of class. Just as *Interaction distance* demonstrates that EDL students have very few opportunities to interact with English, *Student interaction* highlights the understanding that EDL students arrive at school with limited readiness to interact in English at school, or with no readiness at all. The two aspects that explain *Student interaction*, 'Community' and 'School', are illustrated in Figure 8.4.
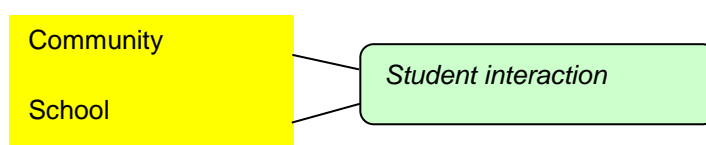
Figure 8.4   Aspects of the *Student interaction* element

The 'Community' aspect captures the extent to which students develop interaction abilities from their experience of the limited English available in their community (as described in Section 8.2.1); therefore this aspect shows how understanding of *Interaction distance* impacts on *Student interaction*. An analysis of participant references concerning the characteristics of successful students (Table 7.7) finds no mention of the ability of students to interact with English that arises from their community interactions in English. Although EDL students may see shop signs and other notices in English, and occasionally meet English-speaking visitors, it is interesting that teachers do not consider these community encounters with English as significant in developing an ability to interact in English. The scarcity of comment on *Student interaction* is consistent with teachers' apparent conviction that the English environment does not interact with EDL students in their communities, restricting students' ability to interact in English in class. Teachers' understanding is that EDL students develop negligible *Student interaction* abilities because of minimal interaction with English in their communities.

Teachers' understanding of this 'Community' aspect of *Student interaction* is significant because if teachers do not appreciate that there may be some interaction experiences possible for students in their community lives, then they are unlikely to direct

their students' attention to these opportunities to experience English, nor will teachers utilise or build on these interaction experiences in class. An understanding of the aspects of *Student interaction* presents teachers with the challenge to acknowledge that their students do not have extensive interactions with English in their communities because there are limited opportunities – *not* because the students lack ability. Further, teachers can appreciate that there are some interaction experiences available to their students that may be identified and utilised for successful learning. While EDL students may not be able to develop interaction abilities from infrequent experiences of English in their community lives, the potential for EDL students to develop interaction abilities from informal English interactions at school needs to be explored.

The 'School' aspect of *Student interaction* identifies the extent to which EDL students develop the ability to interact in English from their informal interaction with English at school. Although no mention in the literature was found on informal English interactions at school, teachers reported that in their informal school conversations students almost exclusively use their Traditional language (Section 8.2.1) and therefore have limited potential to develop the ability to interact from informal English interactions at school. These Traditional language interactions at school were seen by some teachers as detrimental to the English interaction abilities teachers were trying to develop in class. This is a crucial understanding by teachers; that is, that outside of class at school, the English environment is also distant and therefore students are less likely to develop interaction abilities while still at school but not in class. Appendix 12 presents the main points of these literature and study references for the 'Community' and 'School' aspects of *Student interaction.*

The *Student interaction* aspects of 'Community' and 'School' describe teachers' understanding of *Student interaction* for EDL students; namely, that these students develop minimal abilities for interaction with English from their prior learning in the community and informally at school. This element deepens understanding of EDL students' ability to interact and builds on the EDL construct. The challenge for teachers therefore is to encourage interaction in English at school in order to develop interaction abilities in English. *Class interaction* is discussed next.

8.2.3   The demand for class interaction

Study results with an *Interaction* theme contained references about the learning support EDL students require to successfully interact in English in class. These references were used to form the *Class interaction* element, which focuses on developing students' ability to interact in English. The level of learning support required depends on the interaction abilities students have developed from English interactions in their community and informally at school. *Class interaction* is defined through three aspects – 'Teacher models', 'Immersion' and 'Scaffolding' – as illustrated in Figure 8.5.
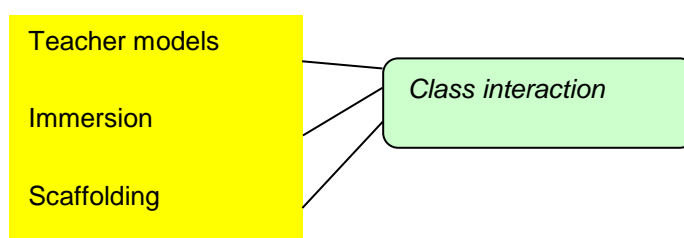
Figure 8.5   Aspects of the *Class interaction* element

The 'Teacher models' aspect explains teachers' understanding of the important role played by teachers in modelling the use of English. At school, role models for the use of English help compensate for the lack of English-speaking role models in EDL students' community lives. As one of the interview participants, Marco, expressed, 'Teachers are crucial because they [students] don't have other people in the family giving a good model of spoken English' (Table 6.5, reference 3). When teachers give good examples of English use, students have the opportunity to learn by imitating their teachers (see Table 6.8, reference 2). This study included many references on the importance of teachers as role models, but no references to this were found in the literature research. The literature's silence on what appears to be an intrinsic aspect of EDL may be caused by previous research not considering the impact of students living in Traditional language communities where there are few regular adult users of English. By being role models of English usage, teachers provide students with an experience of adults using English that is not available in informal school learning or community learning.

The 'Immersion' aspect of *Class interaction* outlines teachers' understanding of providing students with English environment experiences in class to counter the distance of the English environment. Because students are not immersed in English in their community or even at school (see Section 8.2.1), classes need to provide experiences of immersion (Table 6.5, reference 1a). The need for immersion experiences was highlighted during the interviews, with over 70 per cent of teachers identifying immersion as important for successful learning (Section 6.2.2). As Malcolm (2003) recommends, immersion does not simply mean exposing students to English, as this passive approach will not help student English literacy. The teachers suggested a range of activities to give students many opportunities to interact with an English environment, such as providing EDL students with listening, speaking, reading and writing (Table 6.5, reference 2); creating a rich language environment through wall charts and reading books (Table 6.8, reference 4); and organising for group work (Table 6.8, reference 5a). The literature further highlights immersion strategies: introducing activities that provide a structure for communication between students is effective for improving literacy for students with a Traditional language background (Barnett, 1996a), while shared reading with peers improves literacy for Indigenous students (Freeman & Bochner, 2008). The emphasis that these teachers placed on providing immersion activities is meaningful because it shows they recognised these activities are necessary for successful learning – the activities give their students the opportunity to interact with the English environment that is distant from their daily lives.

'Scaffolding' is the third aspect of *Class interaction*. Scaffolding is the demonstration of literacy skills and the support for students' learning in these skills (Schott, 2005). As explained previously, many teachers highlighted that their students needed support interacting in English because of their lack of experience and ability. However, it was not until the critical groups met that scaffolding was mentioned as a strategy – and then only by two teachers. This apparent lack of appreciation for scaffolding is a concern, as scaffolding is helpful for students who require literacy development (Koop & Rose, 2008) because it initially supports students until they have the literacy skills (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002). One scaffolding approach which may be useful for EDL students is Accelerated Literacy (AL), which is specifically designed to be

implemented with Indigenous students (Mullin & Oliver, 2010). Although teachers did not mention scaffolding as a strategy for developing literacy skills, Helen and Lora (Table 6.11, references 4 and 5) do highlight the usefulness of scaffolding language when introducing unfamiliar topics. Given the success of scaffolding reported above, clearly it is a strategy that needs to be considered by teachers of EDL students to support interaction in English in class.

Overall, teachers' understanding of *Class interaction* aligns with an explicit teaching approach with its emphasis on the teaching of literacy skills (Coltheart & Prior, 2007). Although not named as 'explicit teaching' in the references, teachers did indirectly recommend this approach as essential because their EDL students do not have the opportunity to attain these English literacy skills outside of class. It seems that, by scaffolding student learning, with the teacher as the role model and with student immersion in English in a supportive learning environment, teachers may create powerful class interaction experiences. This is an example of how teachers use strategies which they find useful without making the connection to existing similar strategies. It may be important to give teachers the metalanguage for this type of teaching, so they can name what they do as 'explicit' and improve their awareness of existing strategies. Further, *Class interaction* experiences need to be a 'demand' rather than a recommendation for EDL students, as they are essential for EDL students' successful learning. The *Class interaction* element offers some ways of overcoming the difficulties of interacting and learning English as a distant language. Appendix 13 presents the main references from the study and literature for *Class interaction.*

The discussion above shows there is a development in teachers' understanding for each of the elements with an *Interaction* theme. First, understanding begins with an appreciation of *Interaction distance*, that is, a distant English environment that provides few opportunities for interaction with English. *Student interaction* explains how, as a result of these minimal interaction experiences, students develop limited abilities to interact in English in class. Consequently, teachers realise the need for *Class interaction* and the need to create learning activities which support English interaction. Crucially, *Interaction distance*, *Student interaction* and *Class interaction* cannot be fully understood in isolation. A complete understanding requires understanding the process by which

Interaction distance influences *Student interaction*, which determines *Class interaction* needs. This is illustrated in Figure 8.6.
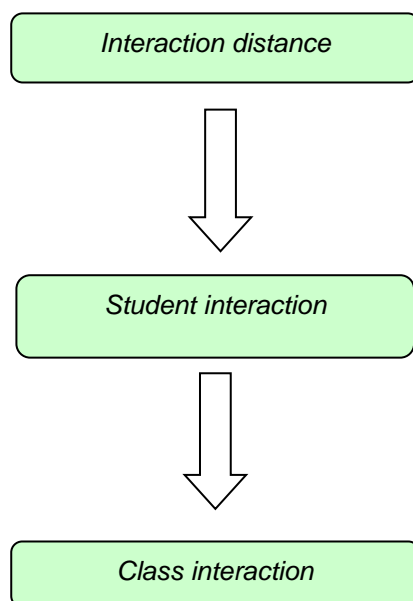
Figure 8.6   The relationship between the three elements of *Interaction*

This discussion has used the study and literature references that have an *Interaction* theme to develop three *Interaction* elements. These elements, as described by their aspects, provide a competent comprehension of *Interaction* that is crucial for a knowledgeable understanding of EDL. The fundamental reality for EDL students is that, unlike Indigenous students from other language backgrounds, they experience an English environment that is so distant so they do not have the opportunity to interact with English and develop the ability to interact in English. Therefore EDL students are heavily reliant on learning support to interact with English in class learning.

8.3   *Benefits* theme

Benefits was the second theme identified in the results. These are the 'benefits' that EDL students experience from using English in their communities and at school. As Figure 8.1 displays, the benefits of English was the least mentioned theme in the literature references, but generated the second-highest number of references by study participants. These references on English benefits, mainly derived from teachers' references, are

combined with the relevant literature to develop elements for teachers' understanding of EDL with a *Benefits* theme*.*

The analysis of the results using the *Benefits* theme led to the development of three elements in the EDL construct: first, EDL students' experience of a distant English environment (*Benefits distance*); second, the learning resources students develop from the benefits of using English in their communities (*Student benefits*); and third, the support needed to benefit from using English at school (*Class benefits*)*.* These elements and the aspects that describe them will be discussed in the following sections.

8.3.1   English benefits: Few and far

Study results that had a *Benefits* theme included information on teachers' understanding of the extent that EDL students benefit from using English in their lives (Tables 5.4–5.6, 5.13, 5.18). The study references are combined to define *Benefits distance* as the lack of opportunities for, or willingness of, students to benefit from using English. The teachers' references on the benefits available to EDL students indicate that in their daily lives students appear to enjoy only a few benefits from using English. These benefits are not only few but may either be far from where students live or may only be gained far into the future. Although there were limited references in the literature on students' experience of benefiting from English, those references did support the findings of the study. *Benefits distance* is described by the three aspects – 'Community', 'School' and 'Future' – as depicted in Figure 8.7.
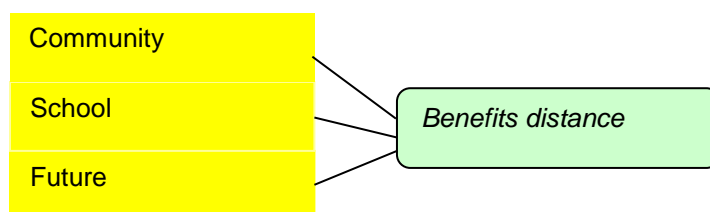
Figure 8.7   Aspects of the *Benefits distance* element

The 'Community' aspect of *Benefits distance* describes the lack of opportunities for EDL students to benefit from English in their community lives. Teacher references

reflect the very few occasions on which students may utilise oral or written English in the community. EDL students may briefly encounter a person in their community, such as a teacher, who prefers to speak in English with them (Table 5.1, reference 2a), or students may use English to read labels or signs when shopping. On the other hand, it is difficult to envisage when it would be useful for students to write in English in their community (Table 5.5, reference 1), especially as EDL students do not have access to learning tools such as pencils and paper at home (Table 5.14, reference 1) – most homes of EDL students would not see the need to have paper or pens. The 'Community' aspect emphasises teachers' awareness of how students have only a few opportunities to use English gainfully in their community lives. Therefore community benefits of using English can be said to be distant.

No mention was found in the literature on how Indigenous students may benefit from using English in their community lives. This silence possibly reflects the lack of research in remote Indigenous communities where English is not used. Researchers may have presumed benefits from the use of English in communities, or may have observed benefits for some Indigenous students but did not consider them noteworthy. However, in this study no such presumption can be made and the minimal experience of benefits from using English in the community was noted. While current benefits of English in communities are difficult to identify, the school benefits of using English for EDL students may have some value.

The 'School' aspect contributes in both positive and negative ways to the understanding of *Benefits distance*, as it identifies both the benefits of using English at school and the limits to those benefits. The main source of benefits for EDL students could be presumed as the use of English at school to learn different subjects. This benefit was identified as the most important benefit by teachers (Table 5.4) as it is not possible to learn most subjects in Traditional languages, due to the need for specific terms and written resources. However, it cannot be taken for granted that EDL students will realise this benefit; as their teachers noted, their students encountered many barriers regarding learning English. English is a difficult language (Table 5.13, reference 2a), which students find takes a lot of effort to learn (Table 5.4, reference 6). EDL students may be confused by the English their teachers use because they do not understand (Table 5.13, reference

3) and they are hindered by a minimal vocabulary (Table 5.18, reference 2). When EDL students attempt to improve their vocabulary they do not enjoy the advantage that Creole-speaking and English dialect-speaking students have, that is, the similarities between their vocabularies and English vocabulary (Table 5.18, reference 3). Consequently, students use 'survival English' of single words or small phrases in class (Table 5.1, reference 6a) because they fear making mistakes and the feelings of shame that accompany this (Table 5.13, reference 1a). They therefore miss out on the benefits of progressing in their learning in English. Even when EDL students progress in their use of English, they do not have opportunities to use English in their communities, so when they are away from school during the holidays learning progress may be lost and benefits of using English reduced (Table 5.4, reference 5). All of these issues limit the benefits EDL students may achieve from learning in English in school.

While there were multiple teachers' references to the benefits of using English at school, no relevant references were found in the literature. This seems a significant omission; for EDL students, using English at school has the potential for the most benefits. It is possible that present thinking assumes that these school benefits are so obvious that they are unquestionable. However, this study reveals that EDL students experience serious limitations to seeing the benefits of using English at school. In theory, English could be very beneficial for EDL students at school; in practice, however, the benefits of using English may be overwhelmed by the limits on achieving these benefits. While teachers showed some awareness of how the benefits of English are limited, as described by the 'School' aspect, this awareness needs to be translated into action to design a class learning environment that makes the benefits of using English achievable.

The 'Future' aspect of *Benefits distance* assesses the potential benefits of using English after EDL students finish primary school. Both teachers' references (Table 5.6) and the literature noted the importance of future benefits for students. The analysis of the results points to increased educational and employment opportunities (Table 5.6, reference 4) which result in an improved standard of living (Table 5.6, reference 1). English is also seen as the basis for engaging in the wider community (Table 5.6, reference 2). The study's results add to the understandings found in the literature: that is, that knowledge of English may not only benefit the individual, but it may have collective

benefits for the student's family and community (Heath, 1986; Heath & Grant, 2000). Further, as shown by Freire, literacy can lead to the social transformation of communities (Anderson & Irvine, 1993). The future benefits of English in education and employment are important, as they appear to be obvious and widely accepted as the main benefits of education in English for Indigenous students learning in a language that is not their own. However, there are reservations about whether these potential future benefits will actually be attained.

Although education and employment are often promoted as potential benefits of using English after finishing primary school, these benefits may only be available to a few EDL students. This study found that there is an understanding that future employment and post-primary education opportunities may be non-existent, minimal or unattainable in the communities of EDL students (Table 5.6, reference 5b). Children may form the opinion that their education will not lead to employment because they see very few adults gaining employment due to their proficiency in English (Table 5.13, reference 4). The teachers' comments are supported by the research, as noted in the literature review (Section 3.2). Studies in Australia (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004) and Papua New Guinea (Ahai & Faraclas, 1990; Maxwell & Yoko, 2004) show that improvements in literacy do not necessarily mean Indigenous students will find employment in the future. Compounding the lack of employment opportunities are indications that some Indigenous students in Australia (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004a; 2004b) and Papua New Guinea (Freeman & Bochner, 2008) are not motivated by the prospect of future employment as a reason for learning in English in class. This may be explained by the fact that EDL students are children; future employment and education, which have meaning for adults, may not be as relevant for children as a motivating force (Table 5.18, reference 4). The future benefits of employment and education appear to be distant and may not be achieved by EDL students.

The three aspects of *Benefits distance* reveal an understanding that EDL students experience few and distant benefits of using English in their schools and communities, and may not recognise that any benefits may be forthcoming in their future lives. Appendix 14 presents the combined literature and study references that constructed the three *Benefits distance* aspects.

An understanding of *Benefits distance* is crucial for teachers' understanding of the English environment experience of EDL students. Schools that used English as the language of learning were introduced to Indigenous communities because of the presumption that learning in English would benefit Indigenous students. However, teachers in this study showed some awareness that the benefits of learning in English are limited and distant for EDL students. This study has shown that the benefits of English cannot be taken for granted and that they will not naturally occur. An understanding of the English environment experience of EDL students requires teachers to investigate carefully the benefits that their students may enjoy from using English in the present and the future. These benefits may not be apparent to their students and, as will be discussed next, EDL students may not be confident they can achieve in English.

8.3.2 Student benefits: Confidence or shame?

The *Benefits* theme is evident in references that consider how well EDL students are able to benefit from using English during class learning. This led to the development of the *Student benefits* element, which considers the ability of EDL students to take advantage of opportunities to use English to benefit themselves. EDL students' willingness to take advantage of such appears to depend on their self-esteem as learners of English. Learning in English at school is not necessarily an experience of confidence for EDL students, but may instead be an experience of shame. This study's references revealed that the crucial factors that determined *Student benefits* were the aspects of 'Learner confidence' and 'Learner shame'. These *Student benefits* aspects are shown in Figure 8.8. Appendix 15 presents the details of the combined literature and study references that constructed these two *Student benefits* aspects.
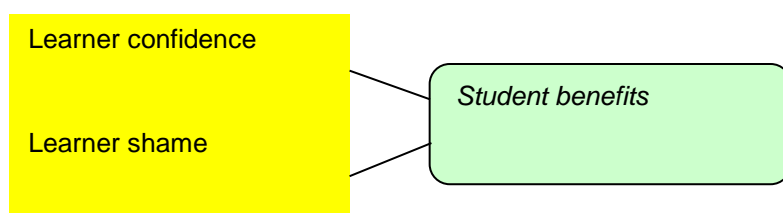
Figure 8.8   Aspects of the *Student benefits* element

'Learner confidence' and 'Learner shame' influence EDL students' attitude to taking risks during learning, which will affect whether they benefit from using English or not. 'Learner confidence' refers to the willingness of EDL students to use English in their daily lives, while 'Learner shame' is the reluctance of students to take risks in using English due to fear of mistakes. A lack of student confidence usually indicates the existence of learner shame. The understanding of 'Learner confidence' developed here is derived from participant responses that refer to students' commitment to use English (Table 6.3, reference 1a), shown by their determination to learn and discover (Table 6.3, reference 3), by an ability to enjoy learning at school (Table 6.3, reference 2), and by the extent that EDL students actively attempt to understand and communicate with others in English (Table 6.3, reference 1b). These different factors were suggested as ways to determine students' 'Learner confidence'. However, teachers understood that their EDL students might more frequently exhibit 'Learner shame' than 'Learner confidence'. EDL students appear to have a heightened fear of making mistakes using English, and a fear of being ashamed in front of their peers (Table 6.3, reference 7b). This fear of making mistakes may be exacerbated by the limited English vocabulary of students (Table 5.18, reference 2). For teachers in this study, 'Learner confidence' and 'Learner shame' were important in their understanding of student learning success.

The literature offered insights on how the learning success of students in general is influenced by how they value a learning activity and their level of interest (Fredricks et al., 2004). However, no studies were found that considered the role of confidence and shame in the learning of Indigenous students in Traditional language communities. It appears that, left to themselves, EDL students are unlikely to benefit from using English in class and the study offers new evidence as to why this may be. Teachers, then, have the challenge of providing opportunities for EDL students to appreciate and benefit from using English in class.

8.3.3 Class benefits: The teacher's challenge

The *Benefits* theme is apparent in the results of the investigation into how class activities can support students to benefit from learning in English. The *Class benefits* element reveals teachers' understanding of how teachers may encourage and enable EDL students

to benefit from English. Because of *Benefits distance*, EDL students have had few experiences of the benefits of using English and minimal appreciation of future benefits. To exacerbate this situation, *Student benefits* references indicate that EDL students lack the confidence to engage fully in learning in English. Therefore teachers of EDL students face the challenge of promoting the benefits of English to their students and convincing their students that these benefits are realisable in the present and the future. Two aspects emerged as the basis for *Class benefits* – 'Present' and 'Future' – as depicted in Figure 8.9. Appendix 16 presents the main points of the references that construct the *Class benefits* element in the study.
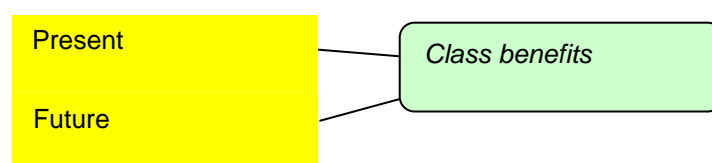
Figure 8.9   Aspects of the *Class benefits* element

The 'Present' aspect mainly includes the benefits students may attain at school rather than in their daily community lives. The challenge for teachers is twofold: one, to help students identify potential benefits, and two, to improve their confidence to take risks in learning. Both the teachers in this study (Table 7.5) and the literature (Munns et al., 2008) stress the need for teachers to show their students the benefits of learning English at school. The crucial 'Present' aspect in the teachers' references indicates that English makes it possible to study learning areas that would not be possible in students' Traditional languages (Table 5.4, reference 2). While educators may agree that this is undoubtedly the main benefit, the teachers' references brought to light the challenges (as noted in the properties of *Student benefits* discussed above); that is, the value of English is not sufficient to encourage student learning success, as EDL students may be discouraged from learning by a lack of confidence or feelings of shame about failure. In the 'Present' aspect, teachers suggested they need to make class learning experiences rewarding and interesting for students (Table 6.11, reference 2); class literacy activities need to identify the uses of English that students see in their daily lives (Honan, 2002) and identify how English may improve their community lives (Kral, 2009). These suggestions

take up the first part of the twofold challenge – helping students identify potential benefits – and reflect the view evident in the literature.

A number of relevant references are presented in Tables 6.3 and 6.11 that emphasise EDL students' need to see immediate benefits (Table 6.3, reference 2), the need for scaffolding (Table 6.11, reference 4) and the need to affirm students as they learn in English (Table 6.11, reference 1). It is important to note that teachers in the interviews and focus groups showed a clear understanding of EDL students' hesitancy in learning due to a lack of appreciation of the benefits of English, or feelings of shame about failure. However it, was not until the final phase of the data collection – the critical group discussion – that concrete strategies were put forward to encourage students to see the present benefits of using English and reduce the risk of failure. There is an implication here that teachers may not have an awareness of how to address directly this lack of confidence or limited awareness of the benefits in their students. Teachers may need to develop a cohesive understanding of the attributes of the 'Present' aspect and of strategies to support EDL students become self-confident learners, who are willing to take risks in learning and benefit from using English in class. This study has contributed to a greater understanding of what teachers know about meeting the challenge of supporting EDL students to achieve the present benefits of using English. Further, EDL students may be supported in their learning by a greater appreciation of the future benefits of using English.

The 'Future' aspect of *Class benefits* outlines teachers' understanding of how teachers may encourage their students to learn by their appreciation of the benefits of English after they finish primary school. In the results (Table 5.4), teachers identified the main future benefit of English as a requirement for post-primary education and future employment. The results reiterate the literature findings: studies of the introduction of English schooling in Indigenous communities in Australia (Nakata, 2001) and Papua New Guinea (Kulick & Stroud, 1993) support the understanding that Indigenous people saw English as the vehicle for access to employment and wealth. While these are laudable statements, the results of this study imply that, at present, the reality for many EDL students is that they will return to community life after finishing school. A school education that does not prepare students for life in their communities (Table 5.6,

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reference 5a) may leave students worse off than those who did not attend school at all (Table 5.6, reference 5c). Promoting further education and employment as reasons for EDL students to learn in English at school could be dubious and unfair.

'Future benefits' may mean that English could be promoted as preparing EDL students to become useful members of their local communities as well as for formal employment, as the results from the study (Table 5.18) and the literature (Solon & Solon, 2006) advise teachers to consider carefully their students' future reality. Consequently, it has been argued that, rather than exclusively promoting literacy as a passport to employment, school literacy should prepare students for life which may not involve formal employment (Hopkins et al., 2005). Teachers need to identify ways that learning English may help to provide the future benefits of a rewarding life for EDL students in their local community. The contribution of *Class benefits* to understanding EDL is the challenge it presents to teachers as the key people – and possibly the only people – who can help EDL students see the value of learning in English.

The *Benefits* theme that was apparent in the study references was used to develop the *Benefits distance*, *Student benefits* and *Class benefits* elements*. These elements make a significant contribution to understanding of EDL because they reveal that the benefits of using English cannot be presumed for EDL students. These benefits are few and distant, which has consequences for students' ability to benefit from English in class and for the challenges faced by teachers in providing learning support. *Benefits distance* shows that the distant English environment results in EDL students experiencing minimal benefits of using English; as a result, EDL students arrive at school with a lack of appreciation of the benefits of English, a lack of learning confidence, and feelings of fear and shame about failure (*Student benefits*). Therefore the challenge is for teachers to help EDL students to appreciate attainable present and future benefits of English, help their students develop confidence in striving for these benefits (*Class benefits*) and help them achieve learning success using English. The understanding explained in these elements is all the more important because it has not been investigated in the literature. As with the elements of the *Interaction* theme, the three elements of *Benefits* are best understood in relation to each other. The relationship between *Benefits distance*, *Student benefits* and *Class benefits* are shown in Figure 8.10.
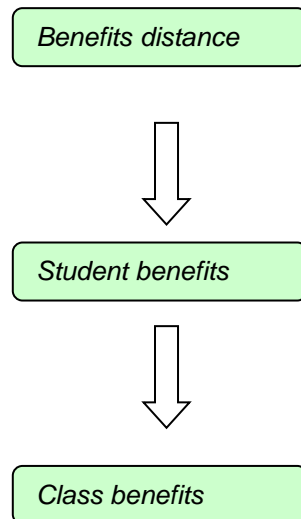
Figure 8.10   The relationship between the three elements of *Benefits*

8.4   *Context* **theme**

The *Context* theme captures teachers' understanding of the contrast between the class learning context and the community learning context. The *Context* theme has an interesting role in understanding EDL. The importance of context dominates the literature on Indigenous students, but the *Context* theme had the fewest direct references of the three themes in this study (see Figure 8.1). This result distinguishes *Context* from the other two themes of *Interaction* and *Benefits*, as the *Context* elements are mainly derived from the literature rather than the study. Nevertheless, the study contributes through its perspective on the context of EDL students specifically, rather than of Indigenous students in general. Further, the study highlights the teachers' lived understandings and experiences of an EDL context without them naming it as 'context'. Understanding of the *Context* elements begins with an identification of *Context distance*, an appreciation of *Student resources* and a determination of *Class resources.*

8.4.1   *Context distance: From flexible to fixed*

The study results and literature that had a *Context* theme mainly contrasted school and community learning. The *Context distance* element can be described as the distance

between class learning experiences and the EDL students' community learning experiences. Although *Context distance* had the smallest number of references, teachers confirmed the description of students' community learning contexts found in the review of the literature. This comparison of learning contexts reveals an understanding of *Context distance* that may be defined by three aspects – 'Learning activities', 'Learning area' and 'Home support' – as shown in Figure 8.11.
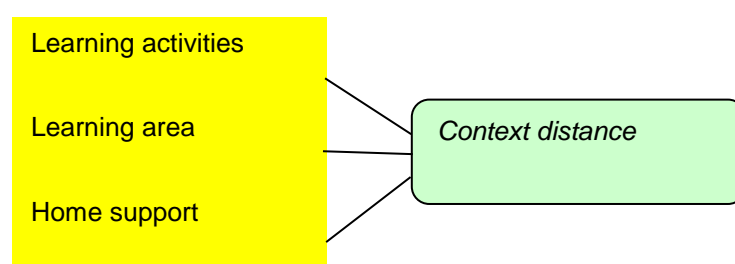
Figure 8.11   Aspects of the *Context distance* element

The 'Learning activities' aspect of *Context distance* contains the notion of contrast as its essence, as it captures the *difference* between class and community learning activities. These learning activities are contrasted in the literature and in the study by the ways the actual activities take place and the use of communication in the activities. In the study, EDL community learning contexts are seen as informal and mostly directed by the children themselves (Table 5.8, reference 1), whereas class learning is more formal and controlled by the teacher. As focus group participant Andrew states, 'As learners they are just observers … but as they go home their learning is taking place by students themselves – they go out to experience things, feel, touch …' (Table 5.14, reference 3); focus group member John comments that school learning is guided by rules, whereas in the community children are free to learn how they wish (Table 5.14, reference 1). These views emphasise the divergence between community and school learning and are strongly supported in the literature.

The research in the literature shows that Indigenous students are seen as active learners in their communities who learn by listening and speaking, observing and imitating (Sims et al., 2003), with children mainly learning together as a group (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002). The literature makes many points about the flexibility of

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community learning: when children read a book or a notice in their community they often read as a group (Burton, 1996); shared learning occurs as they participate in activities and tell stories about those activities (Rennie, 2006). On the other hand, the literature notes that the style of learning at school may be teacher instruction with the students responding together in chorus (Hopkins et al., 2005); the fixed class learning contexts may be the result of teachers enforcing strong control and supervision of learning because they are under pressure to cover the curriculum (Bishop et al., 2004); while students may become passive learners (Munns et al., 2008) due to the orchestrated nature of the class learning environment in contrast to the active learning of the community. The significance of the 'Learning activities' aspect is that it points to the huge gulf between the way EDL students are required to learn in school and how learning occurs in their community lives. This gulf becomes a chasm when communication strategies are examined.

The communication processes of learning in class contrasts greatly with the flexible communication processes in community learning for EDL students. The literature notes that in Indigenous communities speaker control is shared; topics change and flow in an unplanned way; and participants choose between being active participants, where spontaneous feedback is acceptable, or being spectators who are not required to voice an opinion (Malcolm, Kessaris, & Hunter, 2003). This community communication process is very distant from the class communication process described by the study teachers. At school, the learning style can be described as 'sit down and listen to an English-speaking person' (Table 5.8, reference 2). Consequently, school communication may become static and adult-controlled, in contrast to the fluid and unrestricted Indigenous communities' style of communication (Malcolm et al., 2003). While the literature is the major source of these attributes of the 'Learning activities' aspect, this study accentuates that the oral and visual nature of community learning is very different from learning through written texts (Table 5.8, reference 6). While the learning environment of EDL classes is likely to vary in flexibility and the level of activity of students, there is little doubt that *Context distance* is created by classroom learning activities that are mostly constrained by the four walls of the room. When the learning environment of the community, which is only constrained by how far students are willing to walk as they move around and experience

life and learning, is considered, it can be seen that the oppositions captured by 'Learning activities' are a major aspect of *Context distance.*

Context distance can also be created when class learning topics fall outside the community learning experiences of EDL students. The 'Learning area' aspect of *Context distance* describes the distance of class learning area topics from the life experience of EDL students. Evidence of the distance of class topics from community learning is found in both the teachers' references and the literature, which are mutually supportive. For example, the difficulties experienced when learning unfamiliar topics are compounded by learning in unfamiliar English (Table 5.14, reference 6a); learning about topics outside of EDL students' experience makes it difficult for students to understand the concepts and content (Table 5.19, reference 2); literacy teaching is not linked to the Indigenous student's life context in both Papua New Guinea (Hopkins et al., 2005) and Australia (Malcolm et al., 2003); and a study of a group of schools found no evidence of linking the school curriculum to the local Papua new Guinean context (Maxwell & Yoko, 2004). This strong evidence for the 'Learning area' aspect of the *Context distance* can be a guide for teachers to appreciate how some learning area topics can add to *Context distance* because their students will struggle to find connections between the learning topic and their life experiences.

Context distance may further be widened by teacher expectations of the home learning environment. Teachers frequently develop expectations that home learning environments will prepare students for school learning. Teachers of EDL students may expect a supportive home learning environment that is not reflected in the reality of EDL students' homes and communities. The 'Home support' aspect of *Context distance* describes teachers' unrealistic expectations of a home environment that supports class learning: for example, a home environment that supports the school's aims (Table 5.9, reference 1), such as by encouraging students to read and write at home (Table 5.14, reference 7); a home environment in which children see adults who are benefiting from their education through employment (Table 5.14, reference 10); and a home environment that prepares students for learning by giving them a nutritional and healthy lifestyle (Table 5.14, reference 9). It seems that teachers perceive that when these home factors are in place, teachers may believe EDL students will enjoy learning success in

English at school. However, teachers realised that very few EDL students come from such homes. They discerned that the EDL home learning environment does not prepare them for school, as interview participant Gracie states: 'They are not schooled in any way outside of the school. They have got to learn a whole new set of structures and rules'. The stated expectations were recognised as being unrealistic for EDL students.

Although the literature did not reveal any references that described what may count as an essential supportive home learning environment for Indigenous students, there were many references that reported teachers blaming the home environment for lack of learning success. In particular, research in Australia revealed teachers of Indigenous students believed that their students' community life reduced learning success at school. Teachers were seen to blame low literacy levels on poor child-rearing practices (Beresford, 2003a) in homes that had poor living conditions (Munns & Mootz, 2001), which resulted in Indigenous students having few useful learning skills (Beresford, 2003a; Munns & Mootz, 2001). Beliefs and attitudes that blame a lack of learning success on the home environment are alarming because teachers' low expectations of the literacy success of their Indigenous students have been shown to have a negative impact on student learning (Frigo et al., 2003). The 'Home support' aspect of *Context distance* is important for EDL student learning success because it identifies the unrealistic expectations of teachers that flow on to adversely influence learning success. These expectations may actually increase *Context distance*, as the home environment teachers expect is distant from the reality.

Teachers may increase *Context distance* by the class learning environments they create and their expectations of students. The challenge for teachers is to investigate and understand the learning context of their Indigenous students (Evans, 2012). The value of the *Context distance* aspects of 'Learning area' and 'Learning activities' is that they show that teachers are aware that they introduce learning activities and learning areas that are distant from EDL students' home learning experience. *Context distance* may be compounded further, as explained above, by the unrealistic 'Home support' expectations. Further, there is wide-ranging research that links student learning success to strong connections between school and home learning practices (Cairney, 2000), and to home life experience and classroom culture (Gee, 2001). Yet a study of literacy policies and

programs in schools between 1999 and 2009 failed to find any policy or program that responded to the unique learning context of Indigenous students from Traditional language backgrounds (Cross, 2009).

When EDL teachers fail to make connections with EDL students' home learning environments, they create *Context distance* and compromise learning success as students have to adapt daily to the unfamiliar class learning environment (Banham, 2001). Importantly, then, teachers may create *Context distance* not only by what they do but also by what they *do not* do. The main contribution of *Context distance* to teachers' understanding of the English environment experience of EDL students is the recognition that teachers themselves may create distance between class and community learning contexts by the choices they make in creating class learning environments. A summary of participant references and literature references classified as *Context distance* are listed in Appendix 17. Appendix 17 develops Table 7.6 by combining the results of the three data phases with references from the relevant literature.

8.4.2 Student context: Valuing community learning

The literature and study results contained several references within the *Context* theme that described how students' community learning experiences may be valuable for class learning. Before they begin school, and during their school years, EDL students have extensive learning experiences in their communities. Teachers' understanding of how these experiences in the community learning context may be utilised in class learning are described by the *Student context* element. This element is further explained by three aspects – 'Community learning', 'Community knowledge' and 'Transfer challenges' – as shown in Figure 8.12. This element is based on the results from Research Question 2 and the literature. The main points from the study and literature on S*tudent context* are listed in Appendix 18.
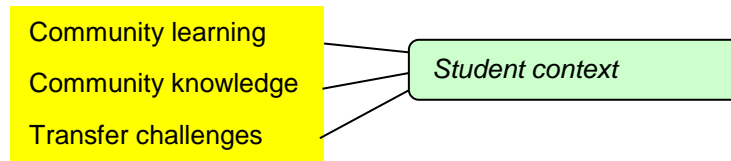
Figure 8.12   Aspects of the *Student context* element

The 'Community learning' aspect describes the learning skills students developed in community learning that are useful for class learning. The discussion of *Context distance* (Section 8.4.1) suggested that teachers create *Context distance* by failing to identify useful learning activities that students develop during community learning. Therefore the challenge for teachers is to identify the community learning experiences of their students that provide opportunities for learning in class. Valuable community learning experiences were identified by teachers as visual learning (Table 5.8, reference 6), group learning and peer teaching (Table 5.8, reference 5), and learning through stories (Table 5.8, reference 6). The literature contributed to the 'Community learning' aspect through an example of how storytelling can be used to teach mathematics to Indigenous students (Matthew, 2012) and through noting useful community learning experiences – such as teaching by demonstration and modelling, and learning by observation and imitation – that may be used in class learning for Indigenous students (Faraclas, 1997; Sims et al., 2003). The value of this aspect is that it foregrounds teachers' acknowledgement that there are community learning experiences that they can draw on in the classroom.

The 'Community knowledge' aspect of *Student context* highlights EDL students' knowledge about their local human and natural environments that may be built on in class. In the literature review, it was proposed that Indigenous students' life experience can be used as a learning resource during class literacy activities (Bishop et al., 2004). The understanding that Indigenous students' life experience may be useful for class learning is consistent with the 'funds of knowledge' perspective (Moll, 2010), that is, students bring to school a wealth of learning resources from their community learning activities. Only a few teachers spoke about using community knowledge in class, for example, by identifying familiar topics (Table 5.19, reference 2). The 'Community knowledge' aspect of

Student context appears to be an undeveloped area of teachers' understanding. As almost all community learning takes place in the Traditional language, the potential for the students' Traditional language to contribute to the *Student context* element needs to be considered.

The usefulness of vernacular literacy skills for English literacy was a controversial issue for this study. The 'Transfer challenges' aspect considers the potential of literacy in the Traditional language to be a basis for English literacy learning. This issue was discussed during the focus groups (Table 6.7) and the critical groups (Table 6.10), and the overall understanding expressed was that EDL students' Traditional language literacy practices were not useful for gaining English literacy. In Papua New Guinea – even though, at the time of this study, the first three years of education is in the Traditional language – teachers unanimously agreed that, because the language structures of Traditional languages and English are so different, there was little possibility of transference (Table 6.7, reference 8). In Australia, a few teachers supported the possibility of transferring skills to English literacy (Table 6.10, reference 3b), while others saw little evidence that it was possible (Table 6.10, reference 3a).

In contrast, case studies were found in the literature that recommended the use of a student's literacy in the home language for class learning in English. A study of students in a Papua New Guinean school reported students who are first taught to read in their Traditional language were able to transfer phonetic skills learned in the Traditional language to learn to read in English (Nagai & Lister, 2004). In Australia, there is some support for a students' Traditional language as the basis for beginning to learn English but this is a contentious issue (Buckskin, 2012). Another study of Indigenous students' learning showed that oral learning skills from the Traditional language can be used as a starting point to develop writing skills (Rennie, 2006). If it is possible to transfer literacy skills, it seems that teachers are not managing the transfer of literacy skills well (Table 6.10, reference 3b) or that the difficulties in implementing bilingual education make it very difficult for students to transfer literacy skills to English (Table 6.10, reference 3a). While case studies were found that supported the transfer of literacy skills, there is a tension in the literature where alternative conceptual models have been developed to

assist the transfer of home language literacy to school language literacy. These models and their relationship to this study are discussed next.

The contrasting stances on whether literacy skills can be transferred from a student's first language to another language can be explained through two models: Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) and Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) (Roessingh & Elgie, 2009). These models are explained in the literature review (Section 3.6.2). The CUP model posits that when a student speaks two languages, language skills and concepts are not separate and progress in the student's first language will aid progress in English (Ndamba, 2008). Therefore the CUP model suggests that the EDL student's Traditional language literacy experiences may contribute to *Student context* and assist English literacy in class. On the contrary, the SUP model states that language skills and understandings in a student's first language cannot be transferred (Norbert, 2005) and language skills already acquired in the first language need to be acquired again in the second language. Therefore the SUP model suggests that the EDL student's Traditional language experiences cannot support English literacy learning (and therefore cannot contribute to the *Student context* element). These two models offer diametrically opposed views of the contribution of a first language to learning, and to learning in a second language.

Studies generally support the CUP premise that first-language literacy skills are useful in class language learning (Buckwalter & Lo, 2002; Norbert, 2005). This research support raises the question as to why most teachers in this study observed that their experience with their EDL students offered little if any evidence of the benefits of first-language literacy skills in class learning. One possible reason for the contrasting views between the academic literature and this study may be due to the different contexts of the teachers. For example, all the teachers in Nagai and Lister's study (2004) who reported that the first-language skills of their Indigenous students were transferred to English learning were literate in the local language. Thus this group is very different to the majority of the EDL teachers who participated in this study. Only one of the few teachers who believed the transfer of literacy skills worked had actually taught in a school where Traditional languages were taught. All of the Papua New Guinean teachers and one Australian teacher who had taught in schools where students were taught Traditional

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languages, at least in the early years of schooling, did not believe the transfer of literacy skills worked. The reason that transfer of literacy skills does not appear to occur may be due to the very different structures of Traditional languages and English (Table 6.10, reference 3a), which made using both languages very confusing (Table 6.7, reference 8).

Ultimately, for EDL teachers, the question of whether the Traditional language literacy skills can be transferred to learning English literacy is a practical rather than a theoretical question. When EDL teachers are not literate in the Traditional language, and when the significant contrast between the Traditional language and English structures is taken into account, EDL teachers will probably not see any benefit in Traditional language literacy, regardless of the academic literature's support of the value of such literacy. Even those teachers who value Traditional language literacy may be hampered by the lack of written texts in the Traditional language (Honan, 2002). In addition, educational policy is increasingly removing Traditional languages as a medium of instruction. At the beginning of the 2013 academic year the Papua New Guinea Department of Education directed that students' vernaculars should no longer be used as the medium of instruction and that all schools, including elementary schools, should use English as the medium of instruction. The education minister stated that this was in response to the concerns of students, parents, teachers and academics (Waima, 2013). EDL teachers' understanding that Traditional language literacy has no practical use for English literacy has serious ramifications for EDL student learning, however.

When Traditional languages are not regarded as a resource for learning EDL, students will not be able to utilise the extensive oral literacy skills they develop prior to school and during their school years. This places EDL students at a great disadvantage when compared not only to English-speaking students, who are able to utilise their home literacy skills, but also to other Indigenous students from Creole or English dialect backgrounds. Students who speak Creole and English dialects are able to utilise some of their literacy skills because of the similarities of their home language to English, particularly when their teachers understand their Creole or English dialect. The challenge for EDL teachers is to find ways that their EDL students' Traditional language can contribute – along with other student community learning experiences – to the *Student*

context as a resource for classroom learning. This forms part of the discussion of *Class context* in the next section.

The three aspects of 'Community learning', 'Community knowledge' and 'Transfer challenges' unpack what is included in *Student context*. These aspects show that there are learning experiences and knowledge developed from community learning that can be used to contribute to successful learning in class, though these appear to be greatly underutilised by teachers of EDL students. Although in theory Traditional language literacy might be able to be transferred to English literacy learning, there is doubt as to whether this is practically possible for students with a Traditional language background. The *Student context* element contributes to the understanding of EDL by highlighting the community learning and knowledge that EDL students have available for class learning. The challenge of utilising community learning experiences in class will be discussed next.

8.4.3 Class context: An opportunity for learning

References in this study and in the literature that had a *Context* theme included information on using community learning experiences in class learning. *Class context* articulates strategies that use community learning experiences to support class learning, and is based on the results of Research Question 2. EDL students, like all students, have extensive and valuable learning experiences in their communities. However, no teachers in this study were able to individually identify a range of community learning skills and knowledge. Some teachers were able to identify a few examples of useful abilities or knowledge from community learning, but most struggled to identify any that could be utilised in class. This gap in teachers' understanding is of concern: for Indigenous students to learn successfully, connections must be made between the class learning environment and community learning (Beresford & Gray, 2006), as it is these connections that motivate Indigenous students to learn (Munns et al., 2008). This apparent lack of understanding by teachers in this study is in contrast to the literature (Section 3.3.3), in which contextualising student learning comprised the largest source of references on Indigenous learning. Understanding of *Class context* therefore is mainly derived from the literature review, with some contribution from the study results. The *Class context* element has three aspects – 'Active learning', 'Knowledge fund' and 'Translation' – as

shown in Figure 8.13. The main points that detail understanding of the three properties of *Class context* are outlined in Appendix 19.
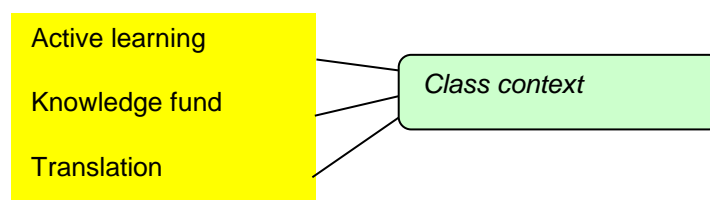
Figure 8.13   Aspects of the *Class context* element

The 'Active learning' aspect of *Class context* considers teachers' understanding of how EDL students' community learning activities may be used in class learning. The few teachers who were able to identify valuable community learning experiences supported student-directed group learning (see Section 8.4.2). Group learning is when students work together in groups and are encouraged to be active creators of knowledge rather than passive learners (Beresford, 2003c). As the literature notes, group learning also enables students to take advantage of their community learning experiences of helping each other in learning (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002), and the use of co-operative groups has been shown to improve the literacy levels of a group of Indigenous students (Schott, 2005). Other active learning strategies in the literature include project-based learning and learning through stories. Project-based learning gives students the opportunity to engage in learning during practical activities (Heitin, 2012), which is the way EDL students experience learning in their communities. Learning through stories is supported by evidence that shared reading improves literacy for Indigenous students (Freeman & Bochner, 2008) and this strategy was identified by some teachers as a community learning experience that can be replicated in class learning. Each of these 'Active learning' strategies provides teachers with the opportunity to use learning skills developed in community learning to achieve successful class learning.

The 'Knowledge fund' aspect of *Class context* highlights the value of knowledge developed during community learning for class learning. Understanding of this aspect is mainly based on the 'funds of knowledge' concept (Moll, 2010). This is the understanding that students develop knowledge during their home and community learning experiences

that can be used during class learning. The funds of knowledge that teachers could help their EDL students use may include the knowledge and processes of learning in the cultural and natural environments that take place in their students' daily lives. Creating learning activities that link to community knowledge has been found to be especially useful as a learning resource for younger students (Frigo et al., 2003) and has been shown to be useful for literacy learning for Indigenous students (Bishop et al., 2004). Approaches that stem from utilising funds of knowledge include the 'artifactual' literacy approach noted in the Literature Review, which recommends using students' knowledge from home experiences as a resource for class literacy (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011), and the 'whole language' approach, which could be used to bring students' knowledge from prior learning experiences to class literacy activities (Coltheart & Prior, 2007).

There is widespread support in the literature (see Section 3.5.1) for linking literacy learning to life experiences of Indigenous students in Papua New Guinea (Honan, 2002) and Australia (Beresford & Gray, 2006), yet these ideas attracted only minimal mentions by teachers in this study. Recognition that students are more likely to understand concepts taught in English if they are related to the students' community life experience was noted by one critical group participant (Table 5.19, reference 2), and a focus group member commented that concepts taught should have some connection to the local community experience (Table 5.14, reference 6b). It is not surprising that most teachers do not seem to consider using the fund of knowledge EDL students develop from their community learning experiences, as the *Student context* element revealed that teachers see a great contrast between the class learning context and the community learning context. Therefore it follows that teachers are unlikely to identify or use their students' funds of knowledge. This lack of understanding would be to the detriment of their students' learning.

The importance of the local context for class learning does not mean that topics that are not part of the community learning experience cannot be taught to EDL students. Teachers recognised that when a topic is outside of their students' community experience, its context needs to be scaffolded (Table 6.11, reference 4), while students who are not given enough information about the context will probably not succeed in their learning (Table 6.11, reference 5). It seems that although the literature presents

extensive understanding of the benefits of using students' funds of knowledge developed in community learning, the value of these funds of knowledge may not be widely appreciated by EDL teachers.

The third aspect of *Class context* is 'Translation', which describes the use of the Traditional language as a support for learning concepts in English. Although most teachers stated that Traditional language literacy could not be transferred to English literacy (Section 8.2.4), some did identify ways in which the Traditional language may be used in class to support the teaching of concepts. When EDL students could not understand a concept in English, the concept could be explained in the Traditional language and then understanding checked in English (Table 6.5, reference 7). Students who understood the concept could explain it in the Traditional language to their peers (Table 6.5, reference 5). Traditional language may be used as an aid in understanding, as long as the focus remained on students ultimately understanding the concept in English (Table 6.5, reference 8). This understanding of translation to support learning in English is evident in the research that has shown how students' English vocabulary can be improved by explaining the English words using the student's home language (Lugo-Neris et al., 2010). By using translation, teachers enable their EDL students to utilise their extensive experience of learning in their Traditional language.

Overall, it seems that teachers may have an incomplete knowledge of the value of the community learning experiences of EDL students and therefore probably fail to use these to support class learning. The literature presented here provides EDL teachers with the opportunity to grow in their understanding of the value of active learning experiences and knowledge from community learning for EDL students. By utilising these learning experiences and knowledge, and aided by translation, teachers will be able to support successful class learning in English.

Teachers' understanding of the *Context* elements begins with their assessment of *Context distance.* As discussed earlier, teachers themselves can increase *Context distance* by creating class learning environments that are distant from the EDL students' community learning environment. If teachers assess that there is a large *Context distance* without realising that it is to some extent caused by their teaching choices, then they will not take the opportunity to identify the skills and knowledge that EDL students develop in

community learning (*Student context*), and therefore will not value or utilise the community learning experiences in class learning (*Class context*). The logical relationship between these aspects is illustrated in Figure 8.14.
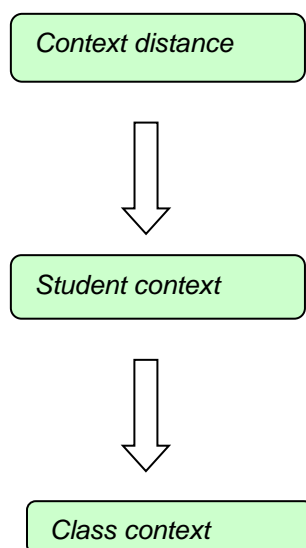
Figure 8.14   The relationship between the three elements of *Context*

8.5   Conclusion

In this study, it was not difficult to find references on Indigenous students in general in the literature, nor was it difficult to find teachers who were willing to share their understanding and experience. Most teachers appear to have a genuine desire to explore and improve their understanding, but at present most of that understanding is based on their personal experiences, with very little mention of any relevant literature. There was no collective understanding of Indigenous students with a Traditional language background demonstrated by teachers who participated in the study or in the literature.

By specifically focusing on Indigenous students with a Traditional language background, this study has identified the themes of *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context* in the study references and in the literature. These three themes have been used to analyse the study results and literature, then bring together the fragmented understandings of teachers and the literature to develop elements for understanding EDL. For each theme there are three elements that, respectively, explain students' English experience,

students' abilities and learning support strategies. The elements developed here provide the basis for a coherent, structured understanding of EDL.

In Chapter 9, these elements will be used to construct an EDL framework for understanding EDL students' experience of a distant English environment, their abilities, and the class learning supports that will contribute to their successful learning in English.

9   English as a Distant Language: A framework for understanding

While the results of this study revealed that teachers' understanding of EDL was fragmented and incomplete, the analysis of the results and literature research offers the basis of a structured and coherent understanding of EDL. In Chapter 8, the themes of *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context* were used to discuss the study results and the references in the literature; from this discussion emerged a set of elements for understanding EDL. These elements will now become the basis of a framework for teachers' understanding of EDL that answers the two main research questions of this study.

In this chapter, the elements are considered for their contribution to each of the two main research questions. Elements that contribute to the same research question are grouped together. The term *threads* is used to signify this tying together of related elements: threads can be very fine yarns, or strings of meaning; they connect elements and have inherent strength, therefore offer an appropriate metaphor for their core role in the framework. While themes were used to analyse both the results and literature references to develop the discrete elements, threads go a step further by binding the elements to show the relationship between them with regards to the research questions. Indeed, the threads create the framework for understanding EDL, allowing the framework to be communicated in a useful and accessible form to teachers, classroom assistants, pre-service teachers and educational systems.

The EDL framework responds to Research Question 1 – the investigation of the extent of the English environment experienced by EDL students – by developing the *English environment distance* thread. Research Question 2 – the consideration of the essential requirements for EDL students' successful learning – is answered by the threads of *Student resources* and *Class resources* in the EDL framework. The consideration of the

framework begins with the fundamental understanding of the distance perspective in response to Research Question 1.

9.1 English in the distance

As the term 'English as a Distant Language' implies, this study places the English *environment* as 'distant' from the EDL student. In so doing, the researcher takes a particular view of what counts as distance in this study. Study participants had differing perspectives as to whether the daily life of the EDL student was distant from the English environment, or whether the English environment was distant from the daily life of EDL students. During the interview phase of data collection, many teachers implied an understanding that it was *the EDL student* who was distant from the English environment. These teachers argued that the student's home learning environment needed to reflect and support the English learning environment that teachers were attempting to establish in class. Teachers reported that supporting school goals (Table 5.9, reference 1), encouraging reading (Table 5.9, reference 3) and providing a home learning environment that supports school learning (Table 5.9, reference 4) were vital for students.

These teacher statements privilege the English environment required for class learning and see the daily lives of the students as distant from the English environment, rather than privileging the EDL student's life and seeing *the English environment* as the distant feature. These teacher views, which see EDL students as distant from an English environment, are consistent with a monolinguistic perspective (Clyne, 2006), which places no value in community language experience and only values English language experience in school learning. In fact, in a monolinguistic view, community language experience is detrimental, as it takes time away from English language experience. Importantly, teachers recognised the pressure here, as they stated that their students came from homes where no one modelled English use, where the learning environment was unstructured and where the environment did not reflect or support school learning (Table 5.9, reference 5). Nevertheless, the teachers' emphasis remained on their students as the problematic, distant factor. As research progressed, however, teacher reflection encouraged a shift in thinking.

The value of peer discussion in the research process became evident as the teachers began to reflect more deeply on what their knowledge and experience meant. As the results show, some teachers moved away from their monolinguistic view in the later data collection phases – the focus groups and critical groups. Teachers began to imply an understanding that it was the English environment that was distant, not the EDL student. Further, English was seen to be *more* distant for EDL students when comparing them to Indigenous students in towns (Table 5.12, reference 6); as Jill, a critical group participant expressed, EDL students were 'confronted with a foreign language which is the English language' (Table 5.17, reference 1). This increasing awareness of the English environment as distant was supported by teachers' references that suggested it was primarily the responsibility of the teacher to provide appropriate class learning resources. There was an acknowledgement, especially in the critical groups (Table 6.11) but also in the focus groups (Table 6.8), that teachers need to provide learning resources for successful learning. This acknowledgement was a development from the interviews, which identified a lack of learning success as primarily caused by students' community language and learning experience.

The development of teachers' understanding during the study is seen in three ways. Five of the Papua New Guinea participants were involved in the interviews and the focus groups. Their participation in the focus groups showed a development of their understanding from their interview comments. The shift was evident in the depth of understanding the group showed, for example, of their students' opportunities to interact in English (Section 5.3.4) and the contrast between school and community learning (Section 5.3.6)

In Australia two participants in the focus group were involved in a critical group; their comments in the critical group also showed a higher level of understanding. Again, the difference was in their ability to express understanding evident in their description of the factors that determine the benefits students may achieve from using English (Section 5.4.2). Some of the interview participants showed growing awareness during the interviews, for example, a PNG participant commented on his new understanding and an Australian participant changed her transcript based on her new understanding.

In Chapters 7 and 8 it was noted that distance was at the core of the analysed teachers' references and, even when not mentioned explicitly, it was echoed in some of the literature that focused on Indigenous students with a Traditional language background. The elements developed in Chapter 8 from the study results of Research Question 1 and the literature include three elements that describe the extent of the English environment experienced by EDL students. These three elements of *Interaction distance, Benefits distance* and *Context distance* are bound together by the *English environment distance* thread as depicted in Figure 9.1. The elements are shown on the left to illustrate how together they form an understanding of EDL students' experience of a distant English environment.
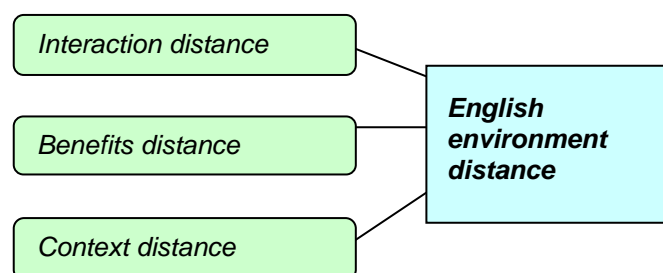
Figure 9.1   Elements within the *English environment distance* thread

An understanding of *English environment distance* was primarily evident in teachers' descriptions of their students' interaction with an English environment that is 'distant' from the students. There are several layers here. First, as described by the *Interaction distance* element (see Section 8.2.1) the English environment is distant from EDL students' community lives, and second, the distance of the English environment also limits English interactions at school. A third layer is evident in the teachers' discussion of the limitations on students' opportunities to benefit from using English in their lives *(Benefits distance*; see Section 8.3.1). A nuance here is that *Benefits distance* notes the *lack* of benefits available to EDL students. As teachers compared the class and community learning contexts, distance could be discerned in their descriptions of the gulf between school and community learning (*Context distance*; see Section 8.4.1).

Together the *Interaction distance*, *Benefits distance* and *Context distance* elements can be used to substantiate understanding of the *English environment distance* thread as foundational. In Figure 9.2, the relative size of each element represents the importance attributed to each element by teachers in the study results. The relative importance of each element was determined by the number of references each element contributed to the total references for *English environment distance*. *Interaction distance* had 49% of the references, *Benefits distance* 27% and *Context distance* 24% (see Section 7.3).
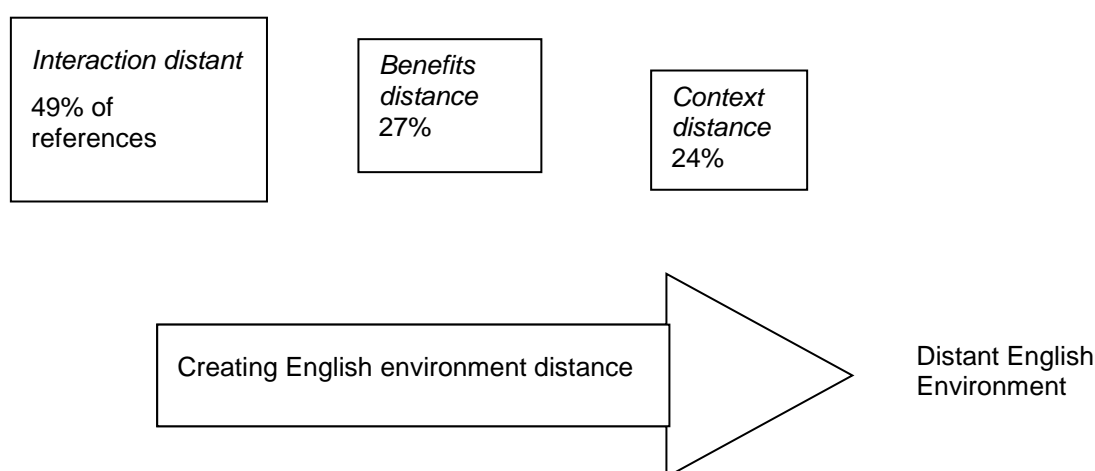
Figure 9.2   The creation of English environment distance

The *English environment distance* thread provides the basis for teachers' understanding of EDL students' experience of a distant English environment. Teachers' understanding of *English environment distance* influences their assessment of the learning resources that EDL students develop during prior and current learning that may contribute to successful learning.

9.2   Successful learning

In Chapter 8, the themes of *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context* were used to analyse the results of Research Question 2 and the literature to form elements. The threads of *Student resources* and *Class resources* are now used to bind the elements that inform an

understanding of how students may be successful in their learning. These discrete elements relate to the learning resources EDL students develop from prior learning (*Student resources*) and the learning resources that need to be provided in class (*Class resources*) to support successful learning by EDL students.

9.2.1   Student resources: Valuing prior learning

Although overall teachers struggled to identify community learning experiences that were useful for class learning, EDL students have rich learning experiences in the Traditional language environment of their communities that may contribute to successful learning in class. *Student resources* were first identified in Chapter 7 via the scattered teacher references identifying the abilities, experiences and skills that EDL students develop in community learning that are useful for class learning. The *Student resources* thread binds together the three elements that emerged from the combined analysis of the results and literature in Chapter 8. As illustrated in Figure 9.3, below, an understanding of what is included in EDL would need to acknowledge how *Student interaction*, *Student benefits* and *Student context* are brought together by the *Student resources* thread, to explain how students' community learning may contribute learning resources for successful learning in class.
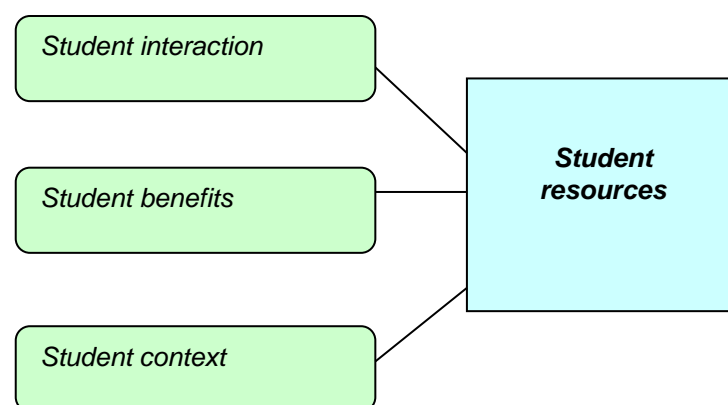
Figure 9.3   Elements within the *Student resources* thread

By binding the *Student interaction, Student benefits* and *Student context* elements, the *Student resources* thread provides a cohesive understanding of the learning resources

developed from prior learning. The *Student interaction* element (Section 8.2.2) identifies abilities that EDL students have developed from prior English interactions. *Student benefits* (Section 8.3.2) assesses the ability of students to take advantage of opportunities to benefit from using English. The *Student context* element (Section 8.4.2) describes the skills and knowledge that students have developed in prior learning experiences.

EDL teachers need to identify *Student resources* developed from not only community learning but also prior school learning. EDL students' experience of *English environment distance* impacts on the development of *Student resources*. In community learning, an absent and distant English environment means that students will only develop limited *Student resources* that are useful for learning in English in class. It also means that when EDL students do develop *Student resources* in class learning, the distant English environment hinders their further development because it does not provide them with the opportunity to utilise these resources in the community. It seems that a complete understanding of the value of EDL students' prior learning requires, one, an appreciation of the *Student resources* that students have developed from preceding community and school learning, and two, an assessment of the impact of *English environment distance* on those learning resources.

The view that EDL students bring limited resources from their prior community learning means that students must rely heavily on support in class to develop resources for learning. In practice, it could be suggested that, initially, the elements of *Student interaction, Student benefits* and *Student context* are all developed through community learning experiences; then, as EDL students begin school and achieve in the classroom, these elements can be further developed. Further, it seems teachers do appreciate that successful class learning may add value to the *Student resources* and that this learning will become part of the *Student resources* to be used in future classroom learning activities. Thus teachers could understand that both the community and the school contribute to EDL *Student resources*. The impact of *English environment distance* in limiting *Student resources* means the process of developing supportive *Class resources* becomes strategically important.

9.2.2 Class resources: Developing learning resources

The challenge for teachers is to utilise *Student resources* in class learning where possible, assess the limits of *Student resources* due to the distant English environment, and then provide the *Class resources* required for successful class learning in English. The element of *Class resources* was identified in Chapter 7 from the results of Research Question 2. The analysis of the results and literature in Chapter 8 developed three elements, *Class interaction*, *Class benefits* and *Class context*, which are bound together by the *Class resources* thread, as illustrated in Figure 9.4.
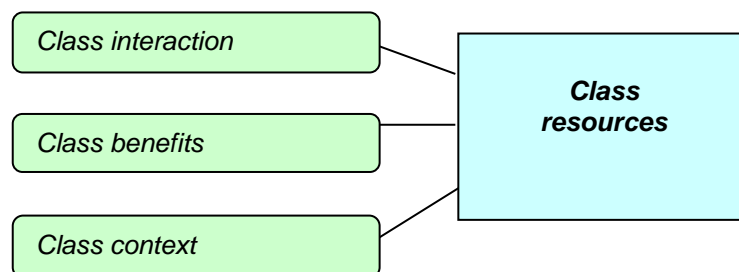
Figure 9.4   Elements within the *Class resources* thread

Understanding what comprises *Class resources* gives teachers a basis for building a class learning environment that supports student learning. The *Class interaction* element (Section 8.2.3) identifies strategies that assist EDL students to develop their ability to interact in English. The *Class benefits* element (Section 8.3.3) explores how teachers can encourage their students to benefit from using English, and recommends the explicit teaching of vocabulary skills. The *Class context* element (Section 8.4.3) provides teachers with an understanding of how prior learning experiences and knowledge of students, and translation, may be used as learning resources in class learning.

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The threads of *Student resources* and *Class resources* go beyond the present understanding articulated in the literature. When Cummins (2008) describes context he speaks of 'internal' and 'external' resources. Internal resources are what the student brings to the learning activity from previous learning experiences, while the external

resources are those the teacher can integrate within the learning activity to support learning. Cummins limits his consideration of resources to context. In his writing, Cummins presumes EAL students are in a language environment where they are interacting with English, whereas this is not the case for EDL students – as the teachers in this study have strongly noted. While the literature provided some understanding consistent with the elements of *Student context* and *Class context*, this provides only a partial understanding of the threads *Student resources* and *Class resources.* A complete understanding of the *Student resources* thread requires an appreciation of both the elements of *Student interaction* and *Student benefits*, and the impact of the *Class resources* elements of *Class interaction* and *Class benefits*, all of which have minimal consideration in the literature. While a focus on context may be appropriate for Indigenous students in general, the teachers in this study highlighted how, for EDL students, the elements of interaction, benefits *and* context are all foundational to an understanding of *Student resources* and *Class resources.*

9.3   The EDL Framework

In Chapter 9, the focus has been to articulate what is important for teachers' understanding of EDL and to suggest how EDL may be communicated in a useful and accessible form to relevant groups. The elements developed in Chapter 8 from the themes of *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context* highlighted the impact of distance on EDL students' English environment experience, the learning resources they develop, and the learning resources they require for successful learning in class. Thus an EDL framework can be proposed that presents *English environment distance*, *Student resources* and *Class resources* as the threads that bind the elements into a cohesive, coherent and cogent form. Sections of the EDL framework have already been presented throughout this chapter. The threads with their elements come together to inform an understanding of English as a Distant language. Figure 9.5 presents them as a unified group, called Stage 1 of the EDL Framework.
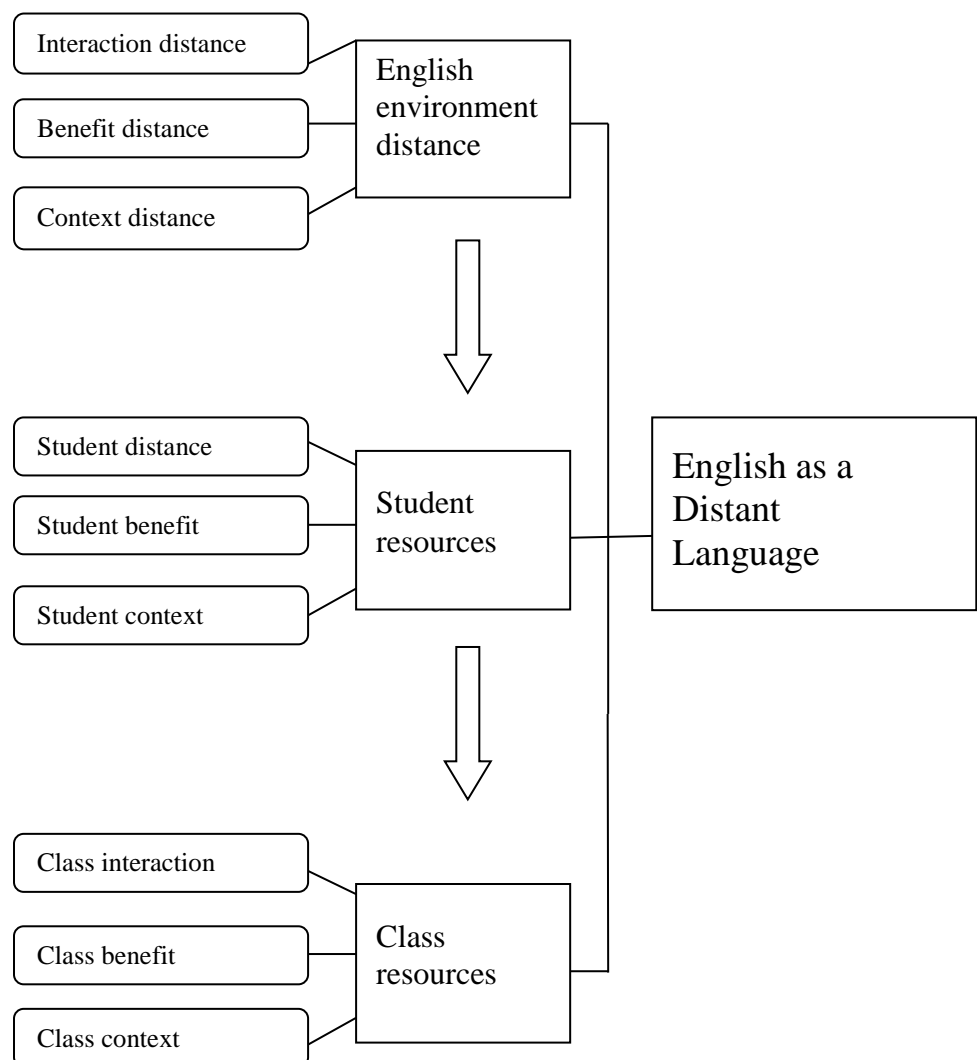
Figure 9.5 EDL Framework – Stage 1

The framework is intended as a response to the complex and fragmented understandings that emerged in the study. It clarifies the relationships articulated in the study and in the literature that were not always apparent to the study's participants at any one time. The framework is deliberately presented as a system network to demonstrate the interrelationships between the threads: that is, teachers' understanding of EDL students' experience of the *English environment distance* results in an awareness of *Student resources* limited by distance; this awareness then encourages the recognition that extensive *Class resources* are required for successful learning.

Stage 1 of the Framework offers a useful start for teachers, allowing a comprehensive overview of the interrelationships, and of the impact of distance on their students and on their classroom work. However, the study offered much more than these understandings. When the data from the interviews, focus groups and critical groups were melded with the literature references, the elements that began to emerge indicated they had different characteristics or 'aspects' attached to them (see Chapter 8). The aspects were derived mainly from the codes but also from the literature references. These aspects explain the elements in practical and distinct ways, and provide discrete points of reference for teachers to consider and enact. Figure 9.6 on the following page displays Stage 2, that is, how the threads are understood by their elements, which are in turn described by their aspects.

The full EDL Framework indicates how understanding English as a Distant Language is based on the *English environment distance, Student resources* and *Class resources* threads. These threads name grouped elements. The elements are described by their aspects. The Framework indicates the potential for teachers' rich understanding of the influence of distance both on EDL students' experience of the English environment and on effective pedagogy. The Framework is grounded in the teachers' words and in previous research: it is the result of both lived experience and academic references.

Research has shown that improvement in teaching and student learning is a consequence of an improvement in teachers' understanding of the language background of their Indigenous students (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004a). For example, student learning has been shown to improve when teachers make connections between class learning and community learning (Rennie, 2006) and when students are able to utilise their community

learning experiences in class (Beresford & Gray, 2006). Teachers' understanding of their EDL students may impact on their expectations of their students' learning potential. The positive link between teacher expectations and student outcomes is outlined in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1. When teachers' expectations of student success become more positive, then student learning may improve. When they form an expectation of their students' ability, teachers behave according to that expectation and influence the chances of it becoming a reality. A positive outlook may occur when teachers see that it is the distant English environment that is the cause of their students' limited English experience, not the lack of 'potential' or 'ability' of their students. The findings from this study propose that an improvement in teachers' understanding, via the EDL Framework, may result in more successful student learning.

Aspects | Elements | Threads

English exposure

Traditional language

Student comparison — Interaction distance

School benefits

Community benefits — Benefit distance — English environment distance

Future benefits

Learning activities — Context distance

Learning area

Home support

Community

School — Student interaction

Learner confidence

Learner shame — Student benefit — Student resources — English as a Distant Language

Community learning

Community knowledge — Student context

Transfer challenges

Teacher models

Immersion

Scaffolding — Class interaction

Present

Future — Class benefit — Class resources

Active learning — Class context

Knowledge fund

Translation

Figure 9.6   EDL Framework – Stage 2

9.4   Conclusion

The EDL Framework developed from this study provides teachers with an opportunity to understand the influence of distance in the conception of English as a Distant Language. Improved understanding can result in improved teaching and may translate into more successful learning for EDL students. However, teachers are not intended to be passive recipients of the EDL Framework. The framework's explanation of the role of *Student resources* and *Class resources* shows that teachers may play a very active role in the learning of their EDL students. Through their choices and actions in enabling students to utilise their *Student resources*, and through the *Class resources* they provide, teachers can be strong leaders in their students' successful learning. This chapter's development of the EDL Framework, particularly the threads of *English environment distance*, *Student resources* and *Class resources*, will now be used in Chapter 10 to explore the implications for teachers, schools and education offices, and offer recommendations for the implementation of EDL.

10 Implications and recommendations

The framework developed during this study has significant implications for teachers'
understanding of English as a Distant Language (EDL). Prior to this study the literature
research revealed that there was no clear, coherent, structured understanding of the
English experience of Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities, nor
were the requirements for their successful learning readily apparent. In addition, no
participant or group involved in the study had a complete or structured understanding of
EDL. This chapter will outline the implications for developing an understanding of the
relationship between distance, EDL students' English environment experience and
successful learning, based on the EDL Framework's threads and their related elements.
This study investigated teachers' understanding, therefore the implications are primarily
for the teachers themselves to develop their understanding of EDL, individually and
together in school teams, and for education offices to support teachers' understanding.
This study also provides recommendations for curriculum developers, policy makers and
researchers that are a consequence of the implications. These implications and
recommendations are proposed to help teachers understand the nature of English
environment distance, identify student resources, implement class resources and
facilitate student learning progress so that EDL students have meaningful and valuable
learning experiences.

To understand the EDL Framework, teachers and others responsible for the
education of EDL students need to appreciate and comprehend the distinctive nature of
EDL. It is proposed that, once the EDL Framework's threads and elements are understood,
implementation should follow. However, understanding does not necessarily lead to
implementation. Many of this study's participants showed some understanding of the
English context of their students but this did not necessarily result in the implementation
of teaching strategies consistent with that understanding. The challenge, therefore, is for
teachers of EDL students to first develop their understanding of EDL, then for education

offices and others to provide the necessary assistance for teachers to implement their understanding and achieve successful learning for their EDL students.

Although EDL students will always experience an English environment that is distant compared to that of EAL/D students, the analysis of this study shows that the EDL student's experience of distance can be the beginning rather than the end of their learning story. The implications of the study suggest that those involved in the education of EDL students *can* contribute to increasing the learning success of EDL students. The next sections explain the implications for teachers and educational authorities. A series of recommendations for curriculum developers, policy makers and researchers follow, to enable the implementation of EDL in schools. Finally, and most importantly, implications for the students themselves will be suggested.

10.1 Implications for teachers

The main implication of this study for teachers is the need to develop understanding of the English environment distance as experienced by their EDL students. The discussion of the results has shown that teachers do not appear to have a full understanding of their students' experience of English as a distant language. Participants showed that, at best, they had limited insights into some aspects of EDL. The task for EDL teachers, therefore, is to increase their awareness of EDL. Teachers' understanding of EDL needs to begin with an appreciation of the distance orientation (Section 10.1.1) of the English environment experience of EDL students; then, the distinctive nature of EDL needs to be recognised (Section 10.1.2).

10.1.1 Distance orientation

The first step for teachers to develop their understanding of EDL is to become aware of EDL's distance orientation. The term 'distance orientation' is used here to describe how the English environment distance may be viewed, which has important implications for teachers' understanding of how their students and their distance from English environments relate to each other. During the discussion (Section 9.1), it was noted that initially some teachers indicated their perception that their *students* were distant from an

English environment. When teachers perceive this distance orientation, the expectation is that the student needs to move closer to the English environment. These teachers see the Traditional language communities as remote; they take the perspective of the *town*, which is where the English environment is located, and regard the Indigenous communities as remote from towns. When teachers fail to take the *student's* perspective of a distant English environment, the onus is on the *student* to improve, rather than the teacher. This has adverse implications for the successful teaching and learning of English.

The 'town perspective' may also disempower teachers, as they determine that successful EDL students require a home learning environment that is supportive of learning in English. As teachers are powerless to change their students' home environment, this view can result in the teachers deciding that they have a minimal influence on improving their students' learning. Teachers with this perspective are, in effect, writing themselves out of the script of their students' learning, casting themselves in a minor role in achieving student learning success. Conversely, when teachers understand English as distant from their students – that is, when the students are seen as EDL students – there are more positive implications for the teachers' approach to the successful teaching and learning of English.

As the study progressed, teachers increasingly inferred an orientation that the English environment was distant from their EDL students, rather than the reverse. This orientation is consistent with that of other categories of students. For example, EAL/D students' experience of English is understood from their perspective – that is, English is additional to their home language or English dialect. When teachers view *the English environment* as being distant, rather than the student, then it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to create an English environment in class. Teachers who adopt this orientation potentially become significant agents of change in their students' learning. These teachers are ready to understand the nature of their EDL students' experience of English as distant, and perceive how this experience distinguishes their EDL students from EAL/D students who have different experiences of English. This understanding prepares teachers to investigate and implement strategies to achieve successful learning for EDL students. While the notion of a teacher's orientation to a distant English environment may appear to be a slight shift in thinking, the implication from this research is that it is

the crucial concept for understanding EDL students and creating successful English teaching and learning.

10.1.2 Recognising EDL as a distinct English experience

As a corollary to the implication outlined above – that teachers need to view the English environment as distant, rather than the EDL student – there is an implication that EDL needs to be recognised as a distinctive English experience by all those involved in EDL education, and especially by teachers as they design the learning environment of the class. Teachers need to understand that when EDL students arrive at school for the first time they discover a learning environment distant from their community learning experiences. The learning environment of the class – driven by written texts, directed by the teacher, favouring an individual learning style, conducted in English, and drawing on non-Indigenous learning areas – is distant from the community learning environment, which is based on oral texts, directed by the child, conducted in groups, based in the Traditional language and drawing on Indigenous learning areas. Prior to this study, teachers did not have available to them a description or understanding of the language and learning experience of their EDL students.

At the time of writing, teachers of Indigenous students in Australia are guided by the ACARA (2012) English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) document. EAL/D attempts to cater for a wider range of language backgrounds, including students born in non–English-speaking countries, and students born in Australia in non–English-speaking families – therefore Indigenous students with a Traditional language, Creole or English-dialect language background are included. However, it is difficult for EAL/D to cater specifically for the individual learning needs of each type of language background. For example, the EAL/D document (ACARA, 2012) only expressly mentions Indigenous students in 120 of the 40 800 words of the document, with only 3 words mentioning Traditional language students. The document does provide information relevant to EDL students in the description of students with limited print literacy, but it does not provide any information to inform teachers' understanding of EDL students' lack of English environment experience. This study highlighted an understanding of the English environment experience of EDL students as foundational to teachers' understanding.

Further, while the themes *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context* were found in this study to be significant for teachers' understanding, *Interaction* and, to a lesser extent, *Context* are only implied and not explained in the EAL/D document; *Benefits* is not mentioned at all. Thus an important implication is that EDL is a distinct category and teachers' understanding of EDL students' English language and learning experiences cannot be met by an understanding of the English experience of EAL/D students.

The English language and learning experiences of EDL students are distinctly different from what is understood to be the experiences of EAL/D students. Most EAL/D students, including Indigenous students with a Creole or English dialect background, experience a closer English environment than EDL students do. The closeness of the English environment can be understood in terms of experiencing more English interaction, having more opportunities to benefit from the use of English, and experiencing fewer differences between the school learning context and community learning context. Consequently, teachers need to base their understanding of EDL on an appreciation that the English environment available to EDL students is more distant than that available to EAL/D students in general, *and* that it is also distinctly different from the environment available to Indigenous students with Creole or English dialect language experiences. The English environment experience of EAL/D students is presented in Figure 10.1 – from the most distant English environment (EDL) to the closest (EAL/D students born in an English-speaking country).

Distant English **Close English**
environment **environment**

Indigenous students

| EDL | Indigenous (Creole) | Indigenous (English dialect) |

Non-Indigenous students

| Newly arrived from non–English-speaking country | Born in non–English-speaking country and family not newly arrived | Born in English-speaking country in non–English-speaking family |
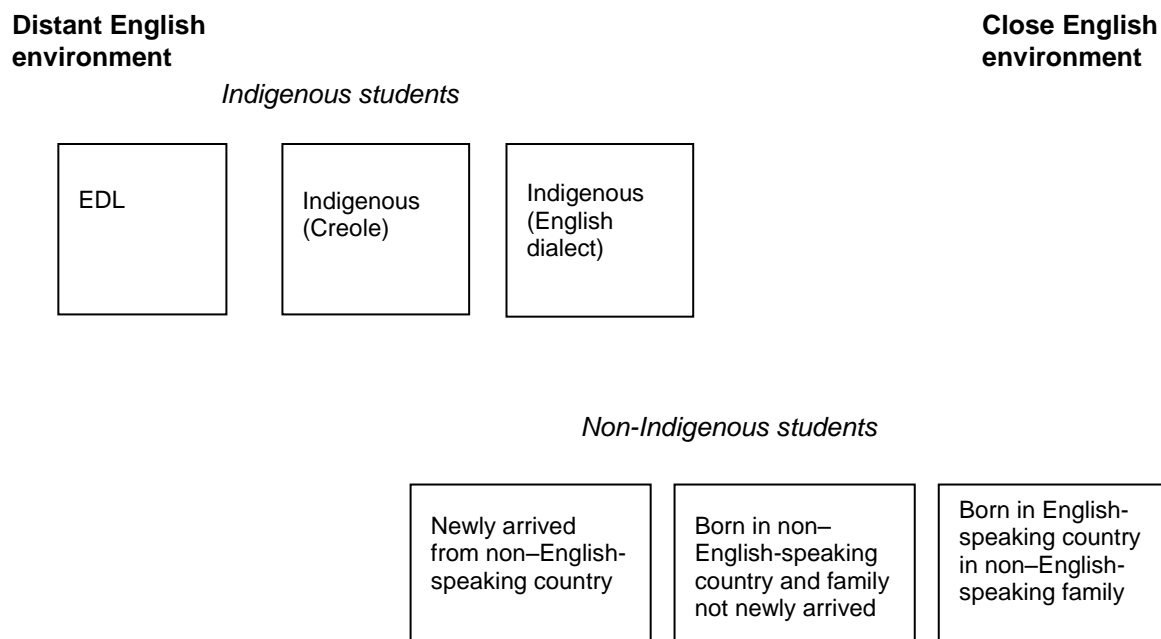
Figure 10.1   The English environment experience of EDL and EAL/D students

EDL students, whose Traditional language shows no influence of English, experience an English environment more distant than Indigenous students from a Creole background (as Creoles show some influence of English) or an English dialect background (as dialects show many similarities to the English used at school). Non-Indigenous EAL/D students who are newly arrived from non–English-speaking countries will experience the English environment to a similar degree as Indigenous students from Creole or English dialect backgrounds, as illustrated by their position in Figure 10.1. On the other hand, EAL/D students born overseas or born to non–English-speaking parents are more likely to experience English in their Australian communities and regions and will probably experience English extensively at school. The slight variation in the English environment experience in these two non-Indigenous groups is indicated in Figure 10.1. Overall, the implication is that the experience of English through the influence of the *Interaction distance*, *Benefits distance* and *Context distance* elements is significantly more distant for EDL students when compared to EAL/D students – including other Indigenous students – and that this contributes to the necessity of regarding EDL students as a distinct group.

When teachers understand that EDL students experience an English environment more distant than that of EAL/D students, there is an implication that they will be less likely to expect their EDL students to learn like EAL/D students who live in towns with an active and closer English environment. Once teachers identify their students as EDL students, and acknowledge these students as a distinct group, their next task is to build their core understandings of EDL. To engage in this complex task, teachers need the support of learning together in school teams.

10.2 Implications for schools: Teachers investigating together

This study shows that EDL is a highly contextualised construct, as understanding is based on an appreciation of EDL students' context of a distant English environment. Therefore there is a strong implication that it is essential for teachers in a school to explore the language environment of their local context as a group. This significant implication is suggested through the success of the collegial discussions of the focus groups and critical groups: it was through discussion that teachers were able to enhance their understanding of the English environment and learning experience of their students. Professional learning communities (PLCs) could possibly provide teachers with the opportunity to collaborate with each other to improve student learning (DuFour, 2012). Although the focus groups and critical groups were not PLCs, as formal plans or directions did not control the process, they did show that collaboration via discussion by peers could build understanding. The in-common teaching experiences of the group progressed the discussion as participants reacted and responded to each other, and became more aware of the complexity of the issues being discussed through shared insights. The study's methodology implies that a similar experience of collaborative sharing and growing awareness may be possible by the use of more formal PLCs, or informal school teams, as teachers together explore the English environment and learning experiences of their EDL students.

A related implication for teacher discussion groups is that a thorough investigation should be guided by the *English environment distance* thread of the EDL Framework, through an exploration of the elements of *Interaction distance*, *Benefits distance* and

Context distance. To achieve an understanding of these elements, teachers could seek evidence for the different aspects of each element described in Chapter 8 (Sections 8.2.1, 8.3.1, 8.4.1) and listed in the EDL Framework (Section 9.3, Figure 9.6). These aspects would provide the focus for teachers' investigations as a group.

By exploring the *Interaction distance*, *Benefits distance* and *Context distance* elements of the *English environment distance* thread, teachers are provided with opportunities to learn together and improve their understanding of the distant English environment experience of their EDL students. This study has shown that for this understanding to make a difference in student learning, teachers need to use their improved understanding of the English environment to identify *Student resources* from prior learning in students' communities and at school. These resources can then be used for class learning. As this study reveals, the identification of *Student resources* can be enhanced by the exploration of the elements of *Student interaction, Student benefits* and *Student context* (Section 9.2.1). Teachers could explore these elements together by examining their aspects, as explained in Chapter 8 (Sections 8.2.2, 8.3.2, 8.4.2).

Such an examination would enable teachers to appreciate the experiences and knowledge their students have developed from prior community and class learning, acknowledge the adverse impact of distance on the development of their students' learning resources and become aware of the learning needs of their students. That is, teachers may become aware of existing *Student resources* that can be utilised and built upon with *Class resources*. Importantly, this study found that *Class resources* are needed because *Student resources* are not sufficient for EDL students to meet the learning needs of class activities. However, schools operating independently are unlikely to have access to strategies and resources that can be developed into *Class resources* appropriate to the needs of their students. Schools therefore need professional development and resource support from their education offices.

10.3 Implications for education offices

This study has shown that once the *Student resources* of EDL students have been identified and utilised, *Class resources* are needed to support successful learning. The

implication is that education offices have a responsibility to help teachers develop their understanding of appropriate resources. While teachers in this study identified strategies that were used to support learning, there was no evidence of the widespread use of common strategies designed to meet the learning needs of EDL students. This implies that EDL teachers cannot be left to themselves to develop appropriate resources. In the absence of a clear and common understanding, teachers are likely to try a diverse range of untested approaches (Buckskin, 2012). While gaining insights into the *English environment distance* and *Student resources* threads would be best achieved in the school by teachers themselves in their local contexts, this is not the case with information about *Class resources.* When it comes to the elaboration of the *Class resources* thread, an understanding of the EDL Framework would be more efficiently accomplished by education offices, as the *Class resources* developed would then benefit many EDL schools, and the understandings required by the EDL Framework would be common to all EDL schools.

10.3.1 Class resources

The implications for teachers' professional development within the *Class resources* thread go to the heart of teaching EDL students. When teachers in this study spoke about successful learning for EDL students, they more often described the lack of success of their students rather than their successes. Successful learning was described in terms of individual students rather than classes. Similarly, descriptions of successful strategies for teaching EDL students were limited. This apparent lack of knowledge and experience of successful classes and strategies implies the need for teachers to have external support in the development of *Class resources.* Education offices potentially will be able to provide wider support and expertise than the teachers in a particular school.

Teachers' education in the provision of the *Class resources* elements is especially important because of the limited development of *Student resources*, as noted above. The areas for developing *Class resources* could be guided by each element's aspects, as these identify strategies teachers use to support EDL students' learning. Although teachers in this study, and researchers in the literature, do identify strategies that can assist in developing the elements of *Class interaction*, *Class benefits* and *Class context*, these

strategies are not extensive, and more are required for successful student learning. In addition, this study showed that while some teachers were able to identify strategies, there was no collective understanding. Therefore education offices need to provide professional development so that teachers are both individually *and* collectively proficient in the strategies already identified, and are provided with further strategies that develop the *Class interaction*, *Class benefits* and *Class context* elements of *Class resources* for their EDL students. The implications of the study's results are that the EDL students' distinctive experience of the English environment requires the development of learning resources suitable for their particular context. This distinction does not mean other strategies and resources that have been successful for students from other language backgrounds are excluded, but at the very least they require modifications to suit the EDL context. The learning resources that are introduced in professional development must be based on the elements of the *Class resources* thread.

The development of *Class resources* therefore requires the involvement of teachers who have experience of teaching EDL students, and who are supported and guided by education consultants who may recommend relevant EDL strategies and resources. All those involved must have an understanding of the *English environment distance* and *Student resources* threads to help ensure that the strategies and resources developed are appropriate for EDL students. When teachers are proficient in the identification and use of *Student resources* and are able to build on these with *Class resources*, teachers will then require professional development in evaluating EDL students' learning progress.

10.3.2 Student learning progress

The EDL Framework developed by this study has implications for teachers' understanding of how EDL students progress in their learning. As this understanding would be common for all teachers of EDL students, professional development provided by education offices would be an efficient way to inform teacher understanding. The implications for understanding the learning progress of EDL students are threefold: first, teachers understand that EDL students progress by developing their student resources; second, teachers understand that methods used for evaluating ESL or EAL/D students' progress in

learning are not appropriate for their EDL students; and third, teachers understand that there are strategies available that can help bring the distant English environment closer to their students.

EDL students can progress in their learning through the development of their *Student resources*. The process for developing student resources is grounded in the three threads of the Framework: it begins with teacher assessment of *English environment distance*, moves on to the evaluation and utilisation of *Student resources*, then follows this with the determination and provision of *Class resources.* One implication of this study is that this cycle, summarised in the following five steps, would result in successful learning and the development of enhanced *Student resources* to aid further learning. The steps are:

A.   Teachers assess *English environment distance.*

B.   Teachers evaluate *Student resources* from previous learning experiences.

C.   Teachers determine *Class resources* required to support student learning.

D.   Successful learning using *Class resources* develops *Student resources*.

E.   *Student resources* capacity grows and is available for future learning.

Although these steps are presented here as sequential, the results of this study indicate that teachers' understanding of each step develops concurrently. The steps show how understanding of one thread informs the following threads. Teachers need professional learning support from their education offices so that they are able to understand this five-step process required for EDL student learning progress. EDL students arrive at school with some student learning resources that can help them in class learning. However, as discussed in Section 9.2.1, the effect of the English environment distance limits EDL students' ability to develop their resources further. Therefore the student resources developed from community learning, while being very useful for learning in the community, were regarded by the teachers in this study as not very effective for class learning in English. As it seems the elements that comprise the *Student resources* thread are not enough to support their class learning, what is required is the provision of *Class resources* that cater for the EDL student's experience of a distant

English environment. The development of *Class resources* into *Student resources* comes as the result of teachers identifying the *Student resources* their EDL students *do* have, aided by the Framework developed in this study. Teachers then can determine what *Class resources* their students specifically need to develop to achieve successful learning in English. As a result of this process, EDL students' resources may be nurtured, resulting in a greater capacity for future learning activities in English.

The process of progressing EDL students' learning presented in the steps above is a deliberate move away from the current guidelines for student learning progress. Documents such as the *English as a Second Language scales* (Australian Education Council, 2001) and the *English as an Additional Language or Dialect teacher resource* (EAL/D) (ACARA, 2012) do not consider the distinctive experience of the English environment for EDL students. The ESL Scales evaluate learning progress in terms of communication, cultural understanding, language structures and strategies as students move along a continuum of second-language acquisition (Australian Education Council, 2001). EAL students are expected to learn to socialise in the language and culture of an English-speaking environment. The ESL Scales contend that students advance in their learning as they become increasingly able to understand and express values and beliefs in English. Thus English progress is understood to be integrated both in terms of the language and of the cultural and life experience of the English environment. This understanding of EAL students' progress does not reflect EDL students' reality. The language and culture of an EDL school is based in a Traditional language community; it therefore does not and cannot reflect the language and culture of an English-speaking environment. In the light of the results of this study, it seems that understanding EDL based on the ESL Scales is not helpful.

The EAL/D teaching resource (ACARA, 2012) is a more recent resource that charts student learning progress through a detailed sequence of literacy skills. However, the resource does not provide any information on how to assess students' use of the skills and knowledge they have developed in community learning, which was highlighted as an important resource in this study. The document's silence on assessing student resources gained from community learning is likely to discourage teachers from accessing these student resources. The EAL/D teaching resource does not assess the learning progress of

EDL students through any concepts that reflect those incorporated into the *English environment distance* thread, yet the results of this study showed this thread to be fundamental to the EDL construct. ACARA's teacher resource appears to be focused on the learning needs of EAL/D students living in English environments, as a stated requirement for EAL/D learning is 'considerable exposure to English' (ACARA, 2012, p. 5). It is difficult to see how this could be possible for EDL students who live in a non–English-speaking environment. In addition, ACARA stipulates that EAL/D students must 'learn about the impact of culture on language' (ACARA, 2012, p. 6). EDL students will struggle to be familiar with or understand a largely absent English culture. ACARA does provide some useful strategies and descriptions of students who, like EDL students, do not have print literacy in their first language. However, it would clearly be difficult for teachers to develop an understanding of EDL students' learning progress through an EAL/D resource that gives minimal consideration to the English environment experience or learning needs of EDL students.

The understanding of EDL developed during this study provides a better basis for understanding EDL student learning progress than the ESL or EAL/D approaches. For EDL students, the strategies teachers employ can help students progress in their learning. The basis for understanding EDL student learning progress is an appreciation of the tension between the elements of the *English environment distance* thread, which describe how distance is increased for EDL students, and the elements of the *Student resources* and *Class resources* threads, which describe how distance may be decreased for EDL students. The tension is illustrated in Figure 10.2.
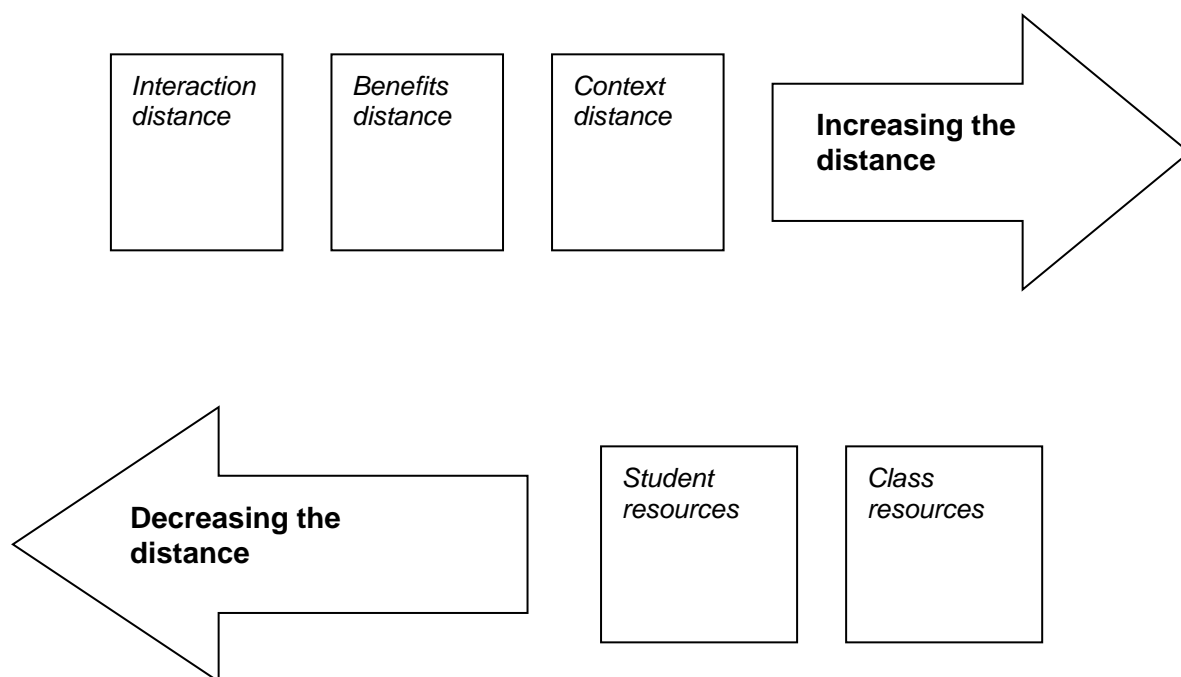
Figure 10.2   Increasing and decreasing the *English environment distance*

Figure 10.2 demonstrates how, by utilising *Student resources* and providing *Class resources*, teachers can reduce the distance of the English environment and assist students in their learning progress. As students' learning progresses, their *Student resources* grow exponentially and can be drawn upon for future learning. To assist teachers in their understanding of *Student resources* growth, the sequence of learning progress, as assessed by the elements of *Student interaction*, *Student benefits* and *Student context*, needs to be developed. The complex task of developing this sequence would need to be coordinated by education offices, utilising people familiar with the EDL context. Teachers and education offices do not work in isolation from the education system: if they are to develop learning environments based on the EDL context, both groups need a curriculum and education policy that recognises the distinct nature and learning needs of EDL students.

10.4 Recommendations

The understanding of English as a Distant Language developed by this study is the basis for recommendations for curriculum developers, education policy makers and researchers. Each of these recommendations is now discussed.

10.4.1 Recommendations for curriculum developers

The recommendation is that curriculum developers need to provide a curriculum that is based on the learning and English language context of EDL students. However, Australia and Papua New Guinea are in the process of implementing new national curricula that could cause significant disadvantage for EDL students. In Australia, EDL students are a small minority of the student population. The new Australian curriculum is intended to increase uniformity for all Australian students, but Australian education policy needs to allow for a separate curriculum that caters for EDL students. This specially designed curriculum would be planned according to the unique language and learning experiences of EDL students who experience English as a distant language. In Papua New Guinea, a country with hundreds of vibrant and diverse languages and cultures, the national curriculum needs to allow flexibility of implementation for the learning needs and English environment experience of EDL students in their local communities. This curriculum must be implemented carefully to avoid bias towards the learning and English language experience of urban students with a Creole or English language background.

If the national curricula of both Australia and Papua New Guinea fail to provide specifically for EDL students, instead expecting EDL teachers and students to conform to curricula suited to students with closer experiences of English, these curricula will inevitably fail EDL students in many ways. EDL students will not gain relevant opportunities to learn, and the assessment methods employed in the national curricula may be used as a means of labelling EDL students as failures. The curriculum for EDL students in primary school needs to acknowledge and build on the local community learning context. This does not mean that EDL students should not be educated in learning areas outside of their community experience, but it does mean that, in order to engage EDL students in learning, their curriculum must value the learning skills and knowledge they gain in community learning.

10.4.2 Recommendations for policy makers

Educational policy plays a decisive role in the educational outcomes for Indigenous students and can be especially detrimental in the assessment policies that are mandated.

The recommendation for policy makers is that education policy needs to promote criterion-referenced assessment for EDL students. Within the national testing regimes of both Australia and Papua New Guinea, which are norm-referenced to a greater or lesser degree, EDL students can never compare favourably to the majority of students whose daily lives are immersed in English. Assessment of EDL students' literacy needs to reflect the learning progress of EDL students and be a guide for teachers in their literacy planning. The current national literacy testing in Australia and Papua New Guinea cannot achieve this when it includes norm-referenced tests.

All Australian schools conduct national literacy tests in Years 3, 5 and 7. In theory, these tests are designed as criterion-referenced tests that attempt to measure the literacy progress of students in primary school. In practice, they are also used as norm-referenced tests; there is widespread evidence in academic journals and the media that these results are used to compare Indigenous students to non-Indigenous students (Ford, 2013; Hall, 2012; Schwab, 2012; Stevenson, 2012; Topsfield, 2012). These tests are not appropriate because they are based on an experience of an English-speaking background, and their questions contain cultural knowledge outside the experience of Indigenous students in remote communities (Wigglesworth, Simpson, & Loakes, 2011). Overall, the Australian tests do not assess how Indigenous students in remote communities may use English in their daily lives (Herbert, 2012) .

In Papua New Guinea, students have a national test that includes literacy as they finish primary school at the end of Grade 8. This is a norm-referenced test whose main aim is to select students for secondary school. Inevitably, students will be perceived as failures if they are not selected for secondary school. As in Australia, PNG EDL students are disadvantaged in the national test because they experience a more distant English environment compared to the urban students with a Creole or English language background. Further, the Grade 8 national test influences testing in all primary grades. In the lower grades, there is pressure to use norm-referenced tests to compare students; again, it is inevitable that EDL students will be reported in the lower positions in their class and may be perceived as failures. Norm-referenced assessment, as the in-practice current education policy in both Australia and Papua New Guinea, is not appropriate for EDL students. The importance of designing assessment strategies that actually assess

what students have learned has also been stressed as important for Indigenous students in other countries, such as a Canadian study that reported the detrimental effects of assessment policies designed for non-Indigenous cultures (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008).

Assessment of literacy should not be limited to what can be measured numerically but provide information that can be used by students so they can be involved with their teachers and their families in decisions on their learning (Tierney, 2000). To involve EDL students in their learning decisions by providing useful information on their progress, the recommendation from this study is that assessment is seen as a series of 'stepping stones' in learning progress. These stepping stones will chart EDL student progress in the development of their *Student resources*, with the elements of *Student interaction*, *Student benefits* and *Student context* each having discrete criteria. These stepping stones will provide for teachers both a diagnostic and assessment tool for the teaching of their students. As a diagnostic tool, the stepping stones will guide teachers in recognising which elements of *Student resources* require particular development through the provision of relevant class resources. Stepping stones will provide a meaningful measure of progress as students build their resources for learning in English, and will offer the opportunity for EDL students to have successful experiences based on their English environment. Rather than assessing what the English environment cannot do, stepping stones will provide students with an assessment of what they *can* do as their student resources develop. Clear stepping stones and curriculum resources will encourage and support EDL students to move from their current literacy level/stepping stone to a higher level of literacy.

10.4.3 Recommendations for researchers

The results and analysis of this study suggest further areas of research that could improve understanding of EDL. The EDL Framework developed in this study needs to be investigated for its efficacy in improving teachers' understanding of the English environment experience of EDL students and the elements necessary for their successful learning. The value of teachers' understanding of the EDL Framework could be compared to the value of using EAL/D as a basis for understanding the EDL context. In addition,

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research could investigate whether an improvement in understanding of EDL assists teachers in advancing EDL student literacy levels.

The findings on *English environment distance* raises questions about whether the distance of the English environment experienced by EDL students may be reduced. The discussion of the study's findings proposed that as *Student resources* develop, EDL students are better equipped for future learning. Further research is required on the relationship between growing *Student resources* and the distant English environment. This study found that the distant English environment resulted in the development of limited *Student resources*. The question for further research is to establish the effectiveness of the proposition suggested above – that when *Student resources* increase through positive growth in the elements of *Student interaction*, *Student benefits* and *Student context*, the influence of the *English environment distance* elements of *Interaction*, *Benefits* and *Context* will decrease. Therefore, does this exchange of influence mean that the EDL student with more developed *Student resources* is actually interacting with a closer English environment? Furthermore, can different EDL students in the same class and living in the same community experience different levels of English environment distance?

The understanding of *English environment distance* suggests further research questions on the capacity of the English environment. 'Capacity' could be used to define the size of the English environment in terms of the amount of interaction with English that is evident, the benefits of using English that are offered, and the strength of links between the English environment and the local community language environment. Research could investigate the relationship between the English environment distance and the capacity of the English environment to provide for EDL students. Does the distance of the English environment influence its capacity? The role of Traditional languages in the education of EDL students emerged in this study as a tension between academic research and study participants (Section 8.4.2). Although academic research in general advocates that Traditional language literacy skills may be transferred to support English literacy, most participants stated that this was not practically possible and that it could actually harm English literacy learning. Research is therefore required to assess the

potential value of Traditional languages in assisting EDL students with practical learning in actual contexts.

The discussion of *Student resources*, and the need to ensure *Class resources* meet EDL student learning needs, raises the question of class learning load. 'Class learning load' could be used to define what an English-based task demands of EDL students in order for them to achieve successful learning in English. Further research could offer a better understanding of the learning load that class activities place on EDL students. Research is required to determine what can be learned from cognitive load theory (van Merrienboer & Sweller, 2005), which assesses the learning demands of learning activities and designs instructional methods that decrease those learning demands. Research would determine whether cognitive load theory may assist understanding of the learning load for EDL students, and help develop class learning activities that reduce the learning load for EDL students.

This study did not investigate the effectiveness of the whole language approach, or the explicit teaching of literacy strategies, which are currently being used in EDL classrooms. Both approaches have their advocates and have evidence of success (Rowe, 2006) for explicit teaching and the whole language approach is reported to be still popular in Australian classrooms (Ferrari, 2012). The positive or negative influence of these two approaches on EDL students' long term achievements in English needs to be investigated.

To investigate most of these recommended research areas, researchers may need to take a similar approach to the one taken in this study; that is, because there is little existing knowledge about EDL students, data must be sourced from the people involved in the education of EDL students. This study benefited from the use of grounded theory, as it enabled the participation of people connected to EDL. The complexity science principles helped ensure that quality data was collected. Therefore future research would probably also benefit from being based on grounded theory and guided by complexity science principles.

This study was the first time that many participants had been given the opportunity to share their experiences of teaching students with a focus on the unique English environment experience of their EDL students. EDL teachers are the key to

improving understanding of EDL. Research is needed to find efficient means to enable EDL teachers to participate in building an EDL knowledge base and to improve their own understanding of EDL. This is difficult because the very nature of EDL is that it is an experience of distance. This distance impacts on the ability to bring teachers together to share their understanding and experiences. An extensive range of strategies for in-service teachers already exists, but research is required to identify which in-service strategies can be used to involve as many EDL teachers as possible in the development of teacher understanding of EDL.

This study is one of the few research projects that has directly addressed the learning context of Indigenous students living in Traditional language communities and attending schools where they learn in English. Throughout the world there are undoubtedly many EDL schools, and lessons could be learned from their experiences of failure and success. Research is needed that will share their wisdom, and share any progress they make in engaging EDL students in school to the point that they experience success. This study only involved teachers and other educationalists; present and former students and their families remain an untapped resource in understanding EDL. It is time for them to be involved in research so that they share their stories and make a powerful contribution to our understanding and implementation of EDL.

10.5 The contribution of implications and recommendations to EDL students' learning

The implications and recommendations explained above have the potential to improve the education of EDL students. The learning environment of the school does not naturally include EDL students. The vast distance of the school learning environment from the community learning environment of EDL students means that these students tend to be excluded from learning. The EDL Framework developed in this study provides EDL teachers with the opportunity to understand the EDL context and create class learning environments where students are engaged in learning rather than excluded from it. The engagement of EDL students will depend on how teachers (individually and in teams), education offices, curriculum developers and policy makers meet the challenge of valuing

and responding to the unique educational context of EDL students as outlined by the EDL Framework.

In summary, teachers need to first adopt the perspective that the English environment is distant from their students, rather than their students being distant from the English environment. If teachers are not able to take this perspective, their students will be in danger of being excluded from learning, as the onus will be on the student to somehow move closer to the English environment, rather than the reverse. By accepting the perspective of a distant English environment, teachers may begin to advance the engagement of their students in learning. Then, by working together, teachers can investigate the distant English environment experience of their students. This probing will enable teachers to identify their students' learning resources and engage their students by using these *Student resources* in class. Failure to identify *Student resources* can contribute to the exclusion of EDL students from learning. Education offices may support successful, engaging learning for EDL students by providing professional development in *Class resources.* However, teachers, schools and education offices will only be able to implement the EDL Framework and engage students if they are supported by an appropriate curriculum and assessment policy. The curriculum and assessment system will only engage EDL students in learning when it recognises and values their learning context and their experience of a distant English environment.

11 Conclusion

Prior to this study there has been no framework for understanding the unique English experience of EDL students. At best, previous understanding has been based on knowledge of EAL/D students. However, this study has shown the theory and practices for teaching EAL/D students to be inadequate for understanding EDL students. For example, the English experience and learning of Traditional language students accounts for only 0.01 per cent of the Australian EAL/D teacher resource (ACARA, 2012). Understanding of the English experience of EDL students continues to be poor; there has even been a suggestion that remote Australian Indigenous students be understood as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students (Buckskin, 2012). The use of grounded theory guided by complexity science principles enabled this study to collect quality data from its participants, which resulted in defining EDL and creating an EDL Framework for understanding.

Many Indigenous students throughout the Pacific Islands region have a Traditional language background (Cleverley, 2007; Coxon, 2007; White, 2007), as do students in Africa (Alimi, 2011; Edu-Buandoh & Otchere, 2012), and they attend schools in which English is the language of instruction. These students could be classified as EDL students. However, teachers of these students only have access to EAL or EAL/D pedagogical documents on which to construct their understanding of the English experience of their students and the elements required for their successful learning. Most extant research on Indigenous students' learning in school is generalised, without consideration of different language backgrounds. Consequently, research and academic literature on the English experience of Traditional language Indigenous students is sparse. This study is highly significant in its contribution to an enlarged body of knowledge and understanding of English as a distant language.

The aim of this study was to investigate teachers' understanding of the extent of the English environment experience of their students in Traditional language communities, and to explore teachers' understanding of the essentials for successful

learning in English by their students. The findings of the study are summarised in the next section for each of the two main research questions and their five sub-questions.

Research Question 1 investigated teachers' understanding of the extent of the English environment in their Indigenous Traditional language students' experience. These teachers showed a growing understanding that the English environment does not have an active presence in students' communities. While this distance could be assumed in students' home lives, it is apparent even at school. For teachers to be effective in their teaching they need to appreciate that the cause of the distance is neither the learning nor language choices of their students, nor their abilities, but is the fundamental inactivity of the English environment in their students' world. The English environment is distant from their students, rather than the reverse. Teachers' understanding of their students' experience of the English environment is explained by the *English environment distance* thread. The investigation of how students experience *English environment distance* was the focus of three sub-questions.

The first sub-question asked teachers to identify their students' opportunities to experience English. Teachers identified a few opportunities where students might speak with their teachers in their communities, read signs, and read labels when shopping, but they reported that students would be unlikely to write or see people writing. Overall the most widespread understanding of these teachers was that EDL students have very few opportunities to interact with English – therefore interaction in English is a distant possibility for EDL students. This low level of English environment activity in the lives of EDL students is defined as *Interaction distance*, which is experienced as a lack of exposure to English and the dominance of Traditional language in the students' lives. Understanding is strengthened through a comparison with the greater interaction opportunities of Indigenous students from an English dialect or Creole background.

The second sub-question asked teachers to evaluate the benefits of their students learning in English. These teachers struggled to identify realisable benefits for their students from the use of English, although it is generally assumed that learning in English is beneficial. The main benefits were seen as the opportunity to read and learn about subjects that cannot be learned in their Traditional language. Some teachers mentioned future benefits of further education and employment, but other teachers doubted

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whether these benefits would be realised. In reality, benefits from using English are distant from EDL students. The extent to which the benefits of using English are limited by a lack of opportunities or motivation is defined as *Benefits distance*. The reality of *Benefits distance* is experienced by EDL students in their community lives, in their learning at school and in their lives after they finish school.

Teachers' understanding of the distance of school learning from community learning was the focus of the third research sub-question. These teachers were able to identify significant contrasts between the class and community learning environments but generally did not appreciate that it is often their class environments that cause the contrast. The learning activities and learning areas of class learning were seen as contrasting with community learning. These contrasts cause the class learning environment to be distant from the community learning environment. This contrast between the class learning environment and the EDL student's community learning environment is defined as *Context distance*. *Context distance* is experienced in the distance between class learning processes and the processes of community learning and knowledge, and in the challenge of utilising Traditional language literacy in class learning.

Research Question 2 investigated teachers' understanding of the essential elements for their students' successful learning. These teachers showed limited understanding of the contribution that their students can make to successful learning through the use of their community learning experiences. There was greater awareness of the need for teachers to provide learning resources to support successful learning. The understandings that were evident both in the results and the literature review were analysed to develop a fuller understanding of the learning resources that EDL students may bring from prior learning experiences in their community and at school. This analysis also furthered understanding of the learning resources that need to be provided in class to support successful student learning. The investigation of the contribution of students and teachers to successful learning was guided by two research sub-questions.

The first sub-question explored teachers' understanding of the characteristics of a successful student. While many teachers found it difficult to identify successful students and the appropriate abilities that EDL students bring from prior learning, some teachers were able to identify learning skills and knowledge from community learning that could

be successful in class. Overall, teachers' understanding was that the distance of the English environment results in students developing only limited learning resources that can be used in class. However, when the analysis of the results was combined with the more abundant literature references, a more sophisticated understanding emerged, indicating that EDL students have the potential to contribute to their learning success. These learning resources are described by the *Student resources* thread. The characteristics, or aspects, of successful students show that they develop learning resources through their prior interaction experiences, they are able to take advantage of opportunities to benefit from using English, and they have rich community learning experiences. However, because EDL students experience a distant English environment, these student resources are not sufficient for learning in English and need to be supported by the teacher's class learning resources.

During the investigation of the second sub-question – teachers' understanding of the characteristics of a successful teacher – teachers described the strategies that they believed successful teachers implement. The analysis of the results and literature explained these strategies as the learning resources teachers need to provide to support successful learning. These learning resources included providing interaction experiences; building students' confidence as learners; developing their appreciation of the benefits of English; and utilising community learning experiences. The teachers in this study perceived they had an extra responsibility because the distant English environment had limited their students' development of their own learning resources. To effectively support successful learning, teachers need to grasp the impact of distance in limiting the learning resources that students can develop; appreciate and utilise their students' resources; and identify the learning resources as described by the *Class resources* thread.

By including the EDL knowledge and experience of 47 teachers and educators with experience in 17 schools in north-west Australia and the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, this study has benefited from the direct involvement of teachers who have worked in the EDL context. Teachers were given the opportunity to explore and share their experiences with, and their understanding of, the students they teach. By their participation in the interviews, focus groups and/or critical groups, teachers were able to clarify their own understandings. Those teachers who participated in the focus groups all expressed clearer

understandings based on their discussions with their peers. Other EDL teachers can benefit from the conceptual framework provided by this study. At present, when teachers begin to teach at EDL schools, they often come from a different cultural and language background to the students they teach. They have travelled long distances and have a limited awareness of the learning environment their students come from. Even when teachers are Indigenous themselves, most EDL teachers find themselves in a language, culture and area quite different from their own language, culture and home. This is certainly the case in Australia, where most teachers of EDL students are non-Indigenous, and in Papua New Guinea, a country with more than 800 distinct languages and cultures where teachers are indigenous to the country but may not be indigenous to the area in which they teach. The EDL Framework developed in this study with its threads, elements and aspects is the vehicle by which teachers and all those associated with the education of EDL students can improve their understanding of EDL.

The EDL Framework constructed in this study provides EDL teachers with the opportunity to base their understanding on their students' perspective. Rather than understanding their students as being distant from English – effectively labelling English as an English for the distant, limited student – teachers may form their understanding from the student's perspective, which represents English as a language distant from their lives. Learning for EDL students is not about what teachers need to teach, it is about what students need to learn; as in any school, it is all about the students themselves. Teachers need to view their students, first, as participants embedded in their community learning environment, and second, as students in the English learning environment that teachers create for them at school. By increasing understanding of EDL, this study can support teachers working together in school teams to create class learning environments that respond to their students' experience of a distant English environment, that utilise the learning resources students have developed, and that provide the class learning resources needed for successful learning. To meet this challenge, teachers need to be provided with opportunities to work together, receive support from education offices through learning resources and professional development, and be able to teach from an appropriate curriculum and assessment system designed to meet the needs of their EDL students.

The understanding of EDL and the EDL Framework represent significant advances in knowledge about the English environment experience and the requirements for successful learning for Indigenous students in Traditional language communities. Teachers no longer need to experience the confusion and a lack of understanding that can result from following an EAL/D model that does not apply to the EDL context. The implications and recommendations in Chapter 10 provide the basis for further research into EDL and the development of curricula, assessment policies and class learning environments that will support EDL students in their class learning. For many EDL students, their years in primary school in their remote community or village will be the only significant and ongoing interaction with an institution outside of their extended family. During their time in primary school, they will explicitly or implicitly learn that success at school is important in the lives of people, and in some way – whether rightly or wrongly – many may come to believe that their success or otherwise at school defines them as a person. The understanding of EDL developed in this study enables all those engaged in the education of EDL students to help their students enjoy a successful, productive learning experience in English at school.

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Appendices

Appendix 1   Study participants

Interviews

Australian Desert Schools:	Ben, Catherine, Gracie, Greg, Ruth, Marcia, Marco
Papua New Guinea Highlands Schools:	Ilikas, John, Kund, Mabola, Mary, Pota, Kuringi, Rachael, Raphael, Samantha, Smith, Tapi, Veronica

Focus groups

Australian Teachers Focus Group:	Kate, Kaye, Lily, Mia, Ann, Bill
Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group:	Pam, Tina, Jody, Lyn, Edith
PNG Focus Group 1:	John, Mabola, Rachael, Tapi, Veronica
PNG Focus Group 2:	Dora, Andrew, Doris, Fred, Lisa, Paul

Critical groups

Australian Teachers Group:	Bill, Fran, Kate
Australian Educators Group:	Helen, Jan, Lora
Papua New Guinea Academics Group:	Gail, Jill, Sue, Ted, Sam

Appendix 2   Semi-structured interviews: Question plan

1. Which languages do your students use when they are at home?

2. Which languages do students use at school?

3. When do your students use English in the community?

4. When do your students use English at school?

5. How close is English in the daily lives of your students?

6. Compare the literacy of Indigenous students who come from town schools to the students who come from the local area.

7. At school, students and teachers use English to learn about other subjects. How successful is this?

8. What are the benefits of using English as a language of learning?

9. What are the disadvantages of using English as a language of learning?

10. What are the main reasons that English is used as the language of learning?

11. How useful would you say English is to the students when they finish at this school?

12. Compare the learning of the student at home with the learning in your classroom.

13. How do you think the student's life experience affects the way that English is experienced in the classroom?

14. What are the characteristics of a student who learns well in your class?

15. Are any of these characteristics connected to their use of English?

16. When a student is in Year 7 in this school, what do you think are the essential skills for the student in using English as a tool for learning and understanding?

17. What are the characteristics of a student who finds learning difficult in your class?

18. Are any of these characteristics connected to their use of English?

19. What learning skills and abilities do students use at home that help them in learning at school?

20. How does the child's Tok Ples/Traditional language structure compare with English structure?

21. To be a successful teacher teaching students using English, what do you need to do?

22. Describe the best classroom environment for teaching and learning English as a language of learning here.

Appendix 3   Research questions and interview questions

1.   What do teachers understand is the extent of the English environment that their Indigenous Traditional language students experience?

  1a.   What do teachers identify as their students' opportunities to experience English?

*   Which languages do your students use when they are at home?

*   Which languages do students use at school?

*   When do your students use English in the community?

*   When do your students use English at school?

*   Compare the literacy of Indigenous students who come from town schools to the students who come from the local area.

  1b.   What do teachers evaluate as the benefits of their students learning in English?

*   What are the benefits of using English as a language of learning?

*   What are the disadvantages of using English as a language of learning?

*   What are the main reasons that English is used as the language of learning?

*   How useful would you say English is to the students when they finish at this school?

  1c.   What do teachers assess as the contrast between school learning and community learning?

*   How close or distant is English from the daily lives of your students?

*   Compare the informal learning of the student at home with the formal learning in your classroom.

*   How do you think the student's life experience affects the way that English is experienced in the classroom?

2.   What do teachers understand are the essentials of successful learning for students who experience this extent of the English environment?

  2a.   What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful student?

*   What are the characteristics of a student who learns well in your class?

*   Are any of these characteristics connected to their use of English?

- When a student is in Year 7 in this school, what do you think are the essential skills for the student in using English as a tool for learning and understanding?
- What are the characteristics of a student who finds learning difficult in your class?
- Are any of these characteristics connected to their use of English?
- What learning skills and abilities do students use at home that help them in learning at school?
- How does the child's Tok Ples/Traditional language structure compare with English structure?

2b. What do teachers identify as the characteristics of a successful teacher?

- At school, students and teachers use English to learn about other subjects. How successful is this?
- To be a successful teacher teaching students using English, what do you need to do?
- Describe the best classroom environment for teaching and learning English as a language of learning here.

Appendix 4   Interview information and consent form

INFORMATION LETTER TO INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: English as a language of learning in
                      Indigenous Primary Schools:
                      The teacher's story?

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr Lorraine McDonald
CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr Maureen Walsh
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Br Rick Gaffney
PROGRAM: Doctor of Philosophy

You are invited to consider participating in the research project: English as a language of learning in Indigenous Primary Schools: The teacher's story? The details of this project are outlined below.

Outline of Project

Students who do not speak English as their home language are known as English as a Second Language students. These students come from a wide range of language backgrounds and experiences. This project is interested in Indigenous students who have a traditional Indigenous language as their home language and attend schools where English is the language of learning. The project aims to discover how educators in Indigenous Primary Schools view English as a language of learning. By an analysis of educators' perceptions the project will endeavour to determine and describe the nature of English as a language of learning for Indigenous Primary Schools within the English as a Second Language spectrum. Educators in Indigenous Primary Schools have an insight into English as a language of learning which is of interest and is valuable. Therefore I am asking you to consider whether you would agree to participate in an interview on this topic of English as a language of learning.

The interview will go for one hour during which time you will be asked to answer questions which will help you to reflect on your views of English as a language of learning. So as not to disrupt your teaching I am asking that the interview takes place outside of class time.

If you do decide to participate in this study you will be making a valuable contribution to knowledge on English as a language of learning in Indigenous Primary Schools. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on and share your views on English as a language of learning. Greater awareness of English as a language of learning in Indigenous Primary Schools will help those involved in the education of Indigenous students. At present research specifically involving teachers of Indigenous studentents from a traditional language background is limited. The knowledge and insights gained

from teachers who participate in this study could aid the development of learning programs for Indigenous students.

Participants are free to choose whether they participate in the project. Participants do not have to be involved in this project. If you agree to be interviewed, you may change your mind and later withdraw. No person is under any obligation at all to participate in this project.

No participant will be identified by their comments. Confidentiality of participants is a guaranteed priority of this research. The identity of participants will be only known by the researcher, Br Rick Gaffney. If the comments of any participant are used in the research report a ficititious name will be used. Participants can be confident their identity will not be revealed in any way.

If you have any questions about this project you may contact:
Dr Lorraine McDonald   Br Rick Gaffney

After this research is completed participants will receive feedback on the results of the research. This proposed research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

If you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the Study, or if you have any question that Dr McDonald or Br Rick Gaffney have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the following address.
Chair, HREC
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Strathfield Campus

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for yourself and return the other copy to Br Rick Gaffney.

M. Walsh
....
Dr Maureen Walsh
(Co-Supervisor)

R/ Gaffney
....
Br Rick Gaffney
(Student Researcher)

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Appendix 5 Australian Teachers Focus Group: Background Information

Students who do not speak English as their first language are known as English as Second Language students. It has only been in the last 40 years that education researchers have looked carefully at the learning context and learning needs of these ESL students. ESL students have a variety of language backgrounds and experiences. Indigenous ESL students either speak an English dialect, Creole or an Indigenous traditional language. This study is investigating the classroom language experience of Indigenous students from a Traditional language background who are learning in and through English.

A focus group discussion is a special type of group discussion. Participants in a focus group discussion all have had the same experience. Your common experience is teaching students with an Indigenous Traditional language background. The other aspect of focus groups is that the discussion is focused on a specific topic.

The focus group process is that the facilitator will ask the group some questions. These questions arose from the interviews that were held in [two schools in north-west Australia] in 2006 and Papua New Guinea in 2007. The facilitator will not be part of the discussion. The role of the facilitator is to introduce the question, make sure the focus group stays on topic, ask for clarification and to ensure all have the opportunity to join the discussion.

Focus group discussion summary

1. This is similar to any group of people having a discussion.

2. The difference between a focus group discussion and other group discussions is that all the people have had a similar experience in a particular area.

3. You have all had the experience of teaching Traditional Indigenous language students using English.

4. The focus group focuses on particular parts of this experience, not every part.

5. The facilitator will ask questions that arise from the teacher interviews in PNG and Australia in 2006 and 2007.

6. Teachers can ask questions of each other if they want more information about something that has been said.

7. The facilitator introduces the topic, asks for clarification if necessary, keeps the group on topic and ensures that all have the opportunity to participate. The facilitator does not participate in the discussion.

Most of your students speak [the local Traditional language]. At school almost all of their learning is in English. I am studying how students like ours with an Aboriginal language background experience English at school. I am not talking about students who mainly speak Aboriginal English or Kriol but students who mainly speak a traditional language like [the local Traditional language]. In 2006 I interviewed teachers here in [two schools in north-west Australia] and in 2007 I interviewed teachers in Papua New Guinea where they also speak traditional languages and learn in English in school. They gave me a lot of information about how their students experienced English. Today I want you as a group to discuss some of the things that teachers said.

I am going to tell you some of the things that they said and then I am going to ask you what you think about the comments that they made. I do not join in the discussion. I only ask the questions.

Appendix 6   Australian Teachers Focus Group: References and questions

1.   When teachers were asked what were the useful learning skills children brought with them to school for their home life, they said:

   They are very observant and they are very visual people so bringing in that in the classroom is very good if you have materials and concrete stuff that they can use in their learning.

   The students have an amazing ability to recognise, engage and understand and interpret with visual imagery so I think you can capitalise on that.

Are learning skills developed while learning through [the local Traditional language] able to be used at school when learning through English?

2.   Some teachers said that their students had only a little interaction with English:

   In the community they're not exposed to any print media at all – they're only exposed to oral English on the TV and on the radio and just by the people when they go to the store or the clinic.

   They're at school for five hours and even in that five hours they still have ten per cent of their time in their language. They've spoken their language as soon as they've got up in the morning until they get into class. And when they play they play in language so they have five hours when they're at school when they have contact with the teacher but they still talk in [the local Traditional language] and as soon as they leave school, walk out that door, they are speaking in language so the only interaction they get is when they see a white person. Limited.

How does the amount of interaction with English affect your students' learning in class?

3.	When teachers were asked what determines whether their students are successful at school, they spoke about interest, motivation and home life:

I think they have to have they want to learn it. They need to have a need or want to discover.

I think kids who have a natural confidence and self-assuredness about them and a sense of themselves [are successful].

Supportive parents that are obviously more educated often … encourage them to be at school.

When parents do not have concern for the children's learning in the classroom the child doesn't show interest in learning also.

You need parents and a home life which complements the school's goals and aims.

4.	Teachers were asked to compare the home learning environment with the school learning environment:

School learning is very much sit down and listen to an English-speaking person. At home it is shared learning. A lot of learning happens when the kids wander around with their friends – they find things and discover with their friends rather than learning directed by adults.

The school learning activities are new to the children. Like the reading and writing. They do not have paper and pencils at home that they played around with.

I don't know that reading and writing takes place outside of school apart from going to the store and picking some food out.

How much home experience do your students have with reading, writing and listening, talking about the contexts and topics of learning that you use in class?

Appendix 7   Aboriginal Teacher Assistants Focus Group: Questions

1. The first interesting thing here and in this school is how much students hear and use when they are not at school or even when they are in school in the playground. When they go out and they are going out in the community, how much English do they hear? Do they hear other people using English or they themselves using English? So I want you to talk about how much you know your own students here in the school, how much do you think they use English when they are not at school, and also how much they might hear other people use English when they are not at school. That's the first thing I would like you to talk about.

2. When Aboriginal kids come into your class and they have been living in regional towns are they different from kids who have been here in the local community all the time? Can you tell any difference?

3. When you look at the kids in your class some of them would be more successful than the others. Some of them find it easier learning English than the other kids. If you can think, in your mind now, one or two of those kids who do well at school. Can you think of why that child does better than the other ones?

4. Now, say kids who don't do well in class. Some kids in your class find it very hard to learn or they don't learn much through English: why do you think? If you think of a kid like that in your class, why do you think that they are not learning well using English?

5. Now, some people say if in the first three years of education – like pre-primary, Grade 1 and Grade 2 – if it is all in [the local Traditional language] and slowly becomes English then that will help the kids learn English. Some other people say as soon as they come to pre-primary, start teaching them in English and that will help hem learn English. So the question really is: does learning through [the local Traditional language] help you when learning through English?

6. So, people say that children in [a] community like ours learn mostly by watching what other people, adults, are doing and they learn that way, whereas in school we learn mostly by being told. Some adult stands up and explains things to you. So when a child

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is in community and you want your child to learn something about culture or how you live, do you explain it to them or do you tell tem to watch you?

Appendix 8   Papua New Guinea Focus Groups: Guide

Focus group discussion

1. This is similar to any group of people having a discussion.

2. The difference between a focus group discussion and other group discussions is that all the people have had a similar experience in a particular area.

3. You have all had the experience of teaching students using English but your students have a Tok Ples background.

4. The focus group focuses on particular parts of this experience, not every part.

5. I will ask you some questions and then you will discuss these as a group.

6. You discuss it; I do not.

7. You can ask questions of each other if you want more information about something.

8. The only time I speak is to ask you the questions and to keep the group on the focus if the group starts discussing another topic.

Many of your students have a Tok Ples background. English is used for teaching and learning in the classroom but when they go out to play and go home they are always speaking in Tok Ples. I am studying how these students with their Tok Ples background experience English. Last year I interviewed teachers here in the Highlands and in other places in PNG and in Aboriginal communities in Australia. They gave me a lot of information about how their students experienced English. Today I want you as a group to discuss some of the things that teachers said.

1.   **Comparing Tok Ples student home learning with school learning**

   School learning is very much sit down and listen to an English-speaking person. At home it is shared learning. A lot of learning happens when the kids wander around with their friends – they find things and discover with their friends rather than learning directed by adults.

The school learning activities are new to the children. Like the reading and writing. They do not have paper and pencils at home that they played around with.

How true are these statements for your Tok Ples students?

2.   **Tok Ples students learning interaction with Tok Pisin students**

I believe vernacular students from a village who go to a town school learn faster than students in a village school because they are also speaking Tok Pisin because of their friends who influence them and the environment.

A Tok Ples student is sitting in class and his desk mate is a Tok Pisin student. Both are learning in English in class. Will the way the Tok Pisin student learns in class affect the way the Tok Ples student learns?

3.   **Tok Ples student home life compared to that of a Tok Pisin town student**

You need parents and a home life which supports the school's goals and aims.

The home develops the child. If he has educated parents he has got more privilege of learning the English language faster than the child who has uneducated parents who are in the village

The parents of kids in urban schools are also of working class where they use English at home.

Compared to rural kids, the parents of town kids can read and write. Most of the parents are educated and they teach their kids in the house to read and write and communicate in English. By the time they go the town kids are already used to the system and especially speaking.

How does the way your Tok Ples students learn with their parents at home affect the way they learn in class?

4.   **People who support Tok Ples students' school learning**

The parents have their full hope in the teacher.

I think because the child is depending on the teacher alone for learning, in regard to English.

Does anyone or anything else help your Tok Ples students learn at school?

5.   **The effect of town living on student learning**

Students who visit towns already have some idea what the significance of education is, why I go to school, why I acquire knowledge and all this, because they are seeing the results of education. They see business firms in the city. They want to be involved in businesses there, they are seeing the end result of what education was for.

The student living closer to town has access to many ways where English language is being spoken there. However a student living in a remote area does not have any access to that.

Does it affect a Tok Ples student's learning when they have not seen people working and living in a number of different situations, like in town?

6.   **Tok Ples student learning confidence**

The students inside the classroom, they give one- or two two-word answer because they feel scared about themselves. They have fear in themselves. They feel that when they make a mistake they feel that they are bad students or they feel bad about themselves.

When a child always gives the wrong answer, other students in the class they may be talking about the child's mistakes. They feel that 'Maybe I am not a good learner so I better go away'.

Have you seen Tok Ples students get discouraged from learning at school because they find learning using English difficult?

7. **Helping Tok Ples students learn**

Students need enjoyment, if they don't enjoy it in the long term their efforts are just going to decrease. They will just be one of the students who are lost in the system. They need enjoyment. That's probably the most important thing.

I really think if the kids are going to be competent in the English in writing and reading and speaking, they need to be immersed in English.

If a teacher explains something and the concept is not being understood by children in the class, then the concept can be translated into the local Tok Ples. Then it will make a difference.

Explain first in English, then in Tok Ples and then you [go] back to English and they will understand. That's it.

How do teachers try to make it easier for Tok Ples students to learn using English?

8. **The distance of English**

English is an important language for our Tok Ples students to learn. However it is difficult for our Tok Ples students because the English language is distant from their daily lives and language experiences.

Is English more or less distant for our Tok Ples students compared to town students?

Appendix 9   Focus groups letter

ACU National

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne
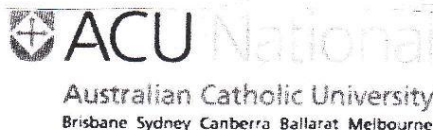
Information Letter to Focus Group Participants

Title of Project: English as a Language of Learning in Indigenous Primary Schools:
The teacher's story?

Principal Supervisor: Dr Lorraine McDonald
Co-Supervisor: Dr Maureen Walsh
Student researcher: Br Rick Gaffney
Program: Doctor of Philosophy

You are invited to participate in a focus group as part of the research project: English as a Language of
Learning in Indigenous Primary Schools: The teacher's story?

This project involves teachers in schools where English is the language of learning and the students speak the
local language of the region. The project investigates how English operates in these Primary Schools.

There has been a great deal of research into English as a Second language students in general but little
specifically in the situation where you are teaching. Because of your experience in teaching in these schools
you are able to make a valuable contribution in our understanding of English as a language of learning in these
Primary schools.

In 2006 and 2007 teachers were interviewed in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea and Aboriginal
communities in north-west Australia. The second part of this project involves focus groups discussing some of
the statements that were made during these interviews.

The focus group will go for about eighty minutes and will include a small group of teachers. Br Rick Gaffney
will introduce the topics and then the group will be free to discuss the topics.

You are free to decide whether you participate in this focus group. If you decide to be part of the focus group
you are free to leave when you wish.

Your identity will not be linked to any comments you make. Your confidentiality will be protected.
If you have any questions you may contact:
Dr Lorraine McDonald at Australian Catholic University.
Br Rick Gaffney

If you have any complaint or concern about the way you were treated during the focus group, or if you have any
question the Dr McDonald or Br Rick Gaffney have not been able to satisfy you may contact:
Chair HREC Australian Catholic University
Any complaint or concern of yours will be confidential and will be investigated and you will be informed of the
outcome.

If you agree to be part of the focus group please sign both forms of the consent form and return one copy to Br
Rick Gaffney.

Dr Maureen Walsh   Br Rick Gaffney
(Co-supervisor)   (Student Researcher)

Appendix 10   Critical groups: Information and letter

⊕ ACU National
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

Information Letter to Critical Group Participants

Title of Project: English as a Language of Learning in Indigenous Primary Schools:
                          The teacher's story

Principal Supervisor: Dr Lorraine McDonald
Co-Supervisor: Dr Maureen Walsh
Student researcher: Br Rick Gaffney
Program: Doctor of Philosophy

I would like to invite you to participate in a Critical Group as part of A research project: English as a Language of Learning in Indigenous Primary Schools: The teacher's story. The research project is examining the nature of English as it operates in schools where the students live in Indigenous language environments. That is, the project focuses on schools where the community language is a traditional Indigenous language, not communities where the language is a Creole or an English dialect.

The Critical Groups are the third phase of the research project. In the first phase a number of teachers from Indigenous Primary schools in Australia and Papua New Guinea were interviewed to obtain their descriptions of English in their schools. Then Focus Groups were held in both Australian and Papua New Guinean Indigenous schools where specific teachers discussed the significant descriptions that arose from the interviews. The purpose of the Critical Groups is to comment on, from a fresh perspective, the main influences that shape English in Indigenous Primary schools that emerged as important topics during the first two phases.

The Critical group will go for about one hour. The topics will be introduced by myself, Br Rick Gaffney, and then the Critical Group will discuss the topics.

You are free to decide whether you participate in this Critical Group. If you decide to be part of the Critical Group you are free to leave when you wish. Your identity will not be linked to any comments you make. Your confidentiality will be protected.

If you have any questions you may contact:
Dr Lorraine McDonald, Australian Catholic University, .

Br Rick Gaffney,

If you have any complaint or concern about the way you were treated during the Critical Group, or if you have any question THAT Dr McDonald or Br Rick Gaffney have not been able to satisfy you may contact:
Chair HREC, Australian Catholic University,
Any complaint or concern of yours will be confidential and will be investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
If you agree to be part of the Critical Group please sign both consent forms and return one copy to Br Rick Gaffney on the day of the Critical Group.

R/. Gaffney   *Lorraine McDonald*

Br Rick Gaffney
(Student Researcher)   (Supervisor)

Critical group information to participants

The focus of this study is the English experience of primary school students who come from an Indigenous language background. These students speak Traditional Indigenous languages thousands of years old. Students use their Indigenous language in their communities and then go to school where they are taught in English. The aim of this study is to explore and describe the nature of English as experienced by these Indigenous students. This study does not include Indigenous students who mainly speak an English dialect or a Creole.

During this study teachers described their students' interaction with English in interviews and focus groups held in two remote Aboriginal communities in north-west Australia and in schools in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. As a result of the literature research, interviews and focus groups of this study, seven main themes have evolved. These themes describe the English experience of students with an Indigenous language background.

1. English speaking communities are **distant** from the communities of their students. This impacts on their students' ability to use and learn English.

2. The English experience of Indigenous students speaking Traditional Indigenous languages is **significantly different** from Indigenous students who speak an English dialect or Creole.

3. The ability of students with an Indigenous language background to **interact** with students and other people in English is a significant factor in a student's ability to learn through English.

4. A students' experience of **contexts** influences their ability to learn. This includes both the **context of the topic** (e.g. a unit on cities) and the **contexts of learning**, that is, oral and written language (e.g. learning by watching and listening compared to learning by reading and writing).

5. Students with an Indigenous language background require **motivation** to succeed in learning in English as English is not their own language. This motivation may be family support, natural ability or an understanding of the benefits of education.

6. Students with an Indigenous language background are limited in **interaction, contexts** and **motivation** and English is **distant** from them. Consequently their **internal**

resources for learning in English are limited. Internal resources are the learning and English experience students have from learning in the community or in previous grades. Students use them in classroom learning. Because their internal resources are limited, teachers and classrooms need to build **external resources** to support classroom learning. External resources may include providing interaction experiences through group work, scaffolding contexts and increasing motivation through creating interesting and rewarding learning experiences.

7. An increase in **interaction, context, motivation** experiences and building **external resources** will increase the momentum of learning for students with an Indigenous language background, resulting in an upward spiral in learning ability.

The role of the critical group is not necessarily to agree or disagree with the above points but rather to respond and react to any or all of the above from their own experience and knowledge of Indigenous students from an Indigenous language background. The discussion is between the group not the researcher, but the participants may ask the researcher any questions. The focus of the critical group discussion is always on primary school students who live in Indigenous communities where a Traditional Indigenous language is the main language not a Creole or an English dialect.

Appendix 11   *Interaction distance* aspects

Aspects	Descriptions
Describes the low level of English environment activity in the lives of EDL students caused by the distant English environment.	
Aspects	**Descriptions**
English exposure	Describes the level at which EDL students experience English in their community and at school. *Community* ▪ English is not the language of choice for the community. ▪ English is rarely heard, but when heard is usually on the radio or TV. ▪ There are very few opportunities to speak with English speakers. ▪ Students only use English when with non-Indigenous people. ▪ There is minimal evidence of written texts, maybe signs and notices at the shop. ▪ Any books are usually too difficult so students only look at illustrations. ▪ English cannot satisfy students' communication needs. *School* ▪ English is mostly only used when students are speaking to the teacher. ▪ It is occasionally used when speaking to their peers in class ▪ English is rarely used out of class during recess times. ▪ Students only use small phases and simple sentences. ▪ Reading and writing only occurs in class. *Proximity* ▪ Students are alienated from English. ▪ English is a confronting language. ▪ English is distant and far. ▪ English is an isolated and foreign language.
Traditional language	Describes the way Traditional language dominates the language environment, pushing English into a minimal role in student life. *Community* ▪ Students mostly use their Traditional language in community. ▪ Students grow up in their Traditional language. ▪ When not using their Traditional language, students occasionally use a Creole or an English dialect when speaking with other Indigenous people. ▪ Young students beginning school may not be aware that English exists in their Traditional language environment. *School* ▪ Students mainly use their Traditional language in and out of class with their peers. ▪ The only time students do not use their Traditional language at school is

	when speaking to their teachers.
	▪ The use of Traditional language at school reduces the effectiveness of English learning at school.
	Importance
	▪ Traditional language belongs to them and their home.
	▪ Traditional language is their natural language.
	▪ Traditional language is the language for understanding.
	▪ Traditional language is the language of choice, not English.
Student comparison	Assesses EDL students' interaction with English compared to that of Indigenous students living in urban areas.
	Community
	▪ Urban students are more likely to have family who use English.
	▪ Urban students need to use English.
	▪ For urban students from different language backgrounds, English may be the common language they need to use.
	▪ Urban students have more access to reading materials and English users.
	▪ Students with a Creole background are more familiar to English.
	▪ The similarities between Creoles and English help students using English.
	School
	▪ Urban Indigenous students have more interaction with oral and written English.
	▪ Urban students show higher literacy skills in school.
	▪ Urban students are more willing and ready to use English.
	▪ Students who live in Creole-speaking extended families in Traditional language communities do better in class.

Appendix 12   *Student interaction* aspects

Aspects	Descriptions
Assesses the interaction abilities that EDL students have developed from prior English interactions outside of class.	
Community	Assesses the extent that students develop interaction abilities from their experience of English in their community. ▪ Students are not prepared for interaction as they rarely experience oral or written English in their community life.
School	Assesses the extent that students develop interaction abilities from their experience of English informally at school. ▪ EDL students develop only limited interaction ability because most conversations are in the Traditional language.

Appendix 13 *Class interaction* aspects

Aspects	Descriptions
Describes those experiences that encourage students to interact with English and others in class	
Teacher models	Describes the important role of teachers in modelling the use of English. ▪ Teachers providing a competent model of reading, writing and speaking. ▪ Teachers provide the only regular experience of using English.
Immersion	Describes how students are provided with English environment experiences in class. ▪ Students can be given access to reading books and wall charts. ▪ Group work and visitors speaking in English offer English experiences. ▪ Shared reading with peers can be used.
Scaffolding	Describes the demonstration and support of student learning of literacy skills. ▪ Teachers demonstrate literacy skills. ▪ Use simple words when explaining so students are not confused. ▪ Scaffold the key words used to teach concepts.

Appendix 14   *Benefits distance* aspects

Describes the lack of opportunities or motivation for students to benefit from English.	
Aspects	**Descriptions**
School benefits	Identifies the benefits and limits to benefits of using English at school. *Benefits* ■ Reading and writing at school. ■ Learning subjects through English. ■ Accessing learning materials, which are all in English. *Limitations* ■ Students feel fear and shame about making mistakes in English. ■ They have limited time at school. ■ Holidays are disruptions to learning in English. ■ It is tiring for students learning in a language that is not theirs. ■ Students are not confident because they find English difficult. ■ Students are confused by their teacher's English, which they do not understand. ■ Students' experience of only one place discourages them from expressing themselves at school. ■ Students cannot see the purpose of education in English as they observe community life. ■ A student may have understanding but their limited vocabulary prevents them from expressing that understanding. ■ English vocabulary is especially difficult for EDL students, as unlike Creoles or English dialects, there are no connections with Traditional languages.
Community benefits	Identifies the benefits and limits to benefits of using English in community. *Benefits* ■ Using English when shopping. ■ Reading labels and signs. ■ Speaking to visitors and teachers. ■ TV and newspapers *Limitations* ■ Few opportunities to use English in the community. ■ Minimal or no reading materials at home. ■ English has limited useful applications in community life.
Future	Assesses the potential benefits of using English after finishing primary school. *Benefits* ■ Gaining a better standard of living. ■ Enabling engagement in the wider community. ■ Writing letters.

	- Being informed about news. - entering employment and further education. - Being involved in community projects *Limitations* - There are limited further education opportunities or productive uses of English. - Literacy improvement for Indigenous students may not improve employment opportunities. - There are limited employment options. - Students may find it more difficult to adapt to community life than people who did not go to school at all. - Children may not be motivated like adults to value English for its use in future employment and education.

Appendix 15   *Student benefits* aspects

Assesses the ability of EDL students to take advantage of opportunities to use English to benefit themselves.	
Aspects	**Descriptions**
Learner confidence	Describes the willingness of EDL students to use English in their daily lives. ▪ Commitment to learning. ▪ Enjoying learning. ▪ Students who want to discover. ▪ Willingness to use English with other students.
Learner shame	Describes the unwillingness of students to take risks in using English due to fear of mistakes. ▪ Fear of shame from mistakes. ▪ Passive dependence on the teacher. ▪ Unwillingness to take risks. ▪ Fear of using English in all subjects. ▪ Knowing the answer but afraid to express it in English. ▪ Low vocabulary.

Appendix 16 *Class benefits* aspects

Describes teachers' understanding of how teachers may encourage and enable EDL students to benefit from English.	
Aspects	**Descriptions**
Present	Describes the benefits students may attain by using English at school. ▪ Help students identify uses of English in their communities. ▪ Promote English as the means of discovering different topics. ▪ Create rewarding and interesting class learning activities. ▪ Identify immediate benefits to sustain long-term efforts. ▪ Encourage learner confidence. ▪ Build student vocabulary skills.
Future	Describes the benefits students may attain from using English after finishing primary school. ▪ Assess the potential for future employment and education. ▪ Consider education for formal employment or to function as a useful community member.

Appendix 17   *Context distance* aspects

Describes the distance of *class* learning experiences from the EDL student's *community* learning experiences.	

Aspects	Descriptions
Learning activities	Describes the contrast between school learning activities and community learning activities. ▪ Reading and writing as a way of learning is unfamiliar to students' experience of oral learning. ▪ Teacher-directed activities are different from students' experience of group learning. ▪ Children are unfamiliar with learning behaviour based on formal rules. ▪ Sitting still and learning in class is distant from active learning in the community.
Learning area	Describes the distance of class learning topics from students' community life experiences. ▪ Learning areas topics outside of community life are difficult if not previously experienced.
Home support	Describes unrealistic expectations of a home environment that supports class learning. ▪ Families support the school's goals and aims. ▪ Parents encourage children to go to school. ▪ Parents provide pencils and reading materials. ▪ Children need good health and nutrition.

Appendix 18 *Student context* aspects

	Describes the student's experiences in the community learning context that may be utilised in class learning.
Aspects	**Descriptions**
Community learning	Describes learning skills students develop in community learning that are useful for class learning. ▪ Visual learning skills. ▪ Learning in groups. ▪ Peer teaching. ▪ Learning through stories. ▪ Learning by observation and imitation.
Community knowledge	Describes students' knowledge of the local environment that is useful for class learning. ▪ Student life experience. ▪ Funds of knowledge.
Transfer challenges	Describes the potential of Traditional language literacy to be used as a skill for English literacy learning. ▪ CUP: literacy skills learned in the vernacular may be applied in English learning. ▪ Some studies have shown that transfer of literacy skills is possible. ▪ SUP: literacy skills learned in the vernacular may not be useful in English learning. ▪ The structure of Traditional languages is very different from English, therefore Traditional language literacy skills are not useful for English. ▪ Transfer of Traditional language skills is not practical because most teachers are not literate in the Traditional language.

Appendix 19   *Class context* aspects

Describes strategies implemented in class to support student learning by making connections between class learning and community learning experiences.	
Aspects	**Descriptions**
Active learning	Describes how EDL students' community learning activities may be used in class learning. ▪ Shared learning. ▪ Child-directed learning. ▪ Group learning with peers. ▪ Oral and visual learning. ▪ Learning through listening and telling stories. ▪ Learning by moving around and experiencing. ▪ Learning by participating in the actual activity. ▪ Learning by observation and imitation.
Knowledge fund	Describes relating class learning areas to the community life experiences of EDL students. ▪ Basing learning on the local environment to reduce *Context distance*. ▪ Scaffolding learning to reduce the difficulties of not having context experience. ▪ Linking storybook knowledge to student life experiences. ▪ Writing based on student experiences. ▪ Oral learning as a resource for written learning.
Translation	Using Traditional language as a support in explaining concepts. ▪ Explaining concepts in the Traditional language to support understanding in English. ▪ Having students who understand the concept explain it to their peers in their Traditional language. ▪ Ensuring the final outcome is always understanding in English.