Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

# Children's responses to a picturebook during a small group, co-constructed read-aloud.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

At Massey University,

Palmerston North,

New Zealand.

Christine L. Braid

2012

## Candidate's statement

I certify that this report is the result of my own work except where otherwise acknowledged and has not been submitted, in part or in full, for any other papers or degrees for which credit qualifications have been granted.

Christine Louise Braid

## Abstract

This study investigated the responses that 21 nine and ten year old children gave to a picturebook read-aloud in small groups within their classroom. The group sessions involved a co-constructed approach based on the children's interactions with the book and each other. The research questions focused on the ways the children responded to the narrative as well as on how they built on each other's ideas to co-construct meaning. The study looked at these questions in the context of the small group and co-constructed nature of the event.

The picturebook *Luke's Way of Looking* by Nadia Wheatley and Matt Ottley (1999) was read aloud to each group and the responses and discussion from these sessions were recorded. The sessions produced rich data, both in quantity and quality. A framework of analysis based on and adapted from the extensive work of Lawrence Sipe (2008) allowed the data to be categorised, analysed, and discussed. The framework was adapted by considering aspects of the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982) as well as the picturebook elements that the children used for their response. The results are presented in relation to this framework.

The findings revealed that the children engaged with the picturebook in ways that enhanced their literary understandings and their thinking about a book. Using the framework of analysis showed that the children's responses fitted into all the categories that Sipe (2008) established for literary understanding and in a spread that was similar to the responses from his study. The children interpreted the messages from the picturebook by using both the words and the pictures and they achieved complex levels of thought by interacting with each other and with the book.

The picturebook enabled them to make inferences and draw conclusions based on how the illustrator used different elements to convey a message. In particular, the children used colour, light, and symbol to explore ideas about possible meanings in the illustrations. The small group setting enabled them

to engage with the book and with each other with ease. The co-constructed approach meant children shared their ideas as they formed them and they built on each other's ideas to a complex level of thinking.

The findings provide evidence that carefully selected picturebooks are an appropriate resource for nine and ten year old children. The findings also show that the small group and the co-constructed approach are important considerations for developing discussions that value the child's voice in the classroom context. These results have implications for school wide literacy policy and classroom practice.

## Acknowledgements

A thesis is many years in the making, not only during the study and writing period but also in the years before. There are many people who have contributed to this thesis.

I acknowledge the participating school, the generous support of the classroom teacher, and the enthusiasm, engagement, and wonderful words of the children. This thesis is only possible because of this.

My thanks go to my supervisors Brian Finch, Valerie Margrain, and Tracy Riley. To Brian for expert direction, sensible parameters, and unending support; to Valerie for ideas that helped with clarity and simplicity as well as your great eye for the details; and to Tracy for joining the team and bringing the important fresh eyes and mind that pushed me to be more coherent.

To all my colleagues, friends and family who showed interest, gave advice, encouraged me to keep on going, and gave me space to get on with it. You know who you are and I appreciate you.

I acknowledge the picturebook artists and authors whose works contribute such a great deal to children's literacy and lives. Particular thanks in regards to this thesis go to Nadia Wheatley and Matt Ottley for *Luke's Way of Looking,* which is a gem of a book, and perfect for the type of thinking and exploring that was the focus of this study. Matt, your generous permission to use copies of the illustrations has allowed the thesis to carry the essence of the picturebook through it. Alongside these artists and authors, I acknowledge the work of theorists and researchers who show us how important picturebooks are. I particularly acknowledge the work of Lawrence Sipe whose extensive studies are a foundation to this study. May his work live on.

I am, of course ever thankful to Jeff, for all the encouragement, support, and care. I guess I now have to remember how to cook, clean, and shop again. Much love as always to Jem, Markku and Jake and thanks for all sorts of inspiration over the years with your thinking and ideas, as well as for putting up with a mother who so often had her head in some sort of book. You are my favourite people.

## Permissions

The research has the approval of the Massey University Ethics Committee (HEC: Southern B application 11/69). The approval letter can be seen in Appendix A.

Permission to use the children's words as part of this study was gained as part of the information and permission sheets (Appendices C-F).

Matt Ottley, the illustrator, granted permission for the use of the illustrations from the picturebook *Luke's Way of Looking.* The letter seeking this permission is in Appendix H. An email granting this permission can be seen in Appendix I.

## Table of Contents


**CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT** ..... 2

**ABSTRACT** ..... 3

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ..... 5

**PERMISSIONS** ..... 6

LIST OF TABLES ..... 10

LIST OF FIGURES ..... 10

**CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION** ..... 13

**1.1 RESEARCHER'S MOTIVATION AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY** ..... 13

**1.2 AN ENCOMPASSING PERSPECTIVE OF LITERACY** ..... 14

**1.3 THE NEED FOR RESEARCH** ..... 15

**1.4 THE FOCUS OF THIS THESIS** ..... 16

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS ..... 17

**CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW** ..... 19

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW** ..... 19

**2.1 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT** ..... 20

**2.2 SOCIAL SEMIOTICS** ..... 21

**2.3 PICTUREBOOK THEORIES** ..... 25

WORDS AND IMAGES ..... 25

ELEMENTS OF ART ..... 28

**2.4 STORY AND NARRATIVE** ..... 31

**2.5 LITERACY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND STRATEGIES** ..... 32

MULTIMODAL LITERACY ..... 33

**2.6 LITERARY UNDERSTANDINGS** ..... 35

**2.7 READER RESPONSE THEORIES** ..... 36

**2.8 THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT** ..... 38

**CHAPTER SUMMARY** ..... 38

**CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY** ..... 41

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW** ..... 41

**3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH** ..... 41

CONSTRUCTIVISM ..... 41

CRITICAL THEORY ..... 42

**3.2 METHODOLOGY** ..... 43

INTERPRETIVISM ..... 43

CASE STUDY ..... 44

**3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN** ..... 45

QUALITY ISSUES ..... 45

ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS ..... 47

EDUCATED CONSENT ..... 47

THE PARTICIPANTS ..... 48

THE CLASSROOM TEACHER ..... 48

THE CHILDREN AS PARTICIPANTS ..... 49

THE RESEARCHER AS PARTICIPANT ..... 49
GROUP SIZE ..... 50
TEACHING APPROACHES ..... 51
THE IMPORTANCE OF TALK ..... 53
CHOICE OF TEXT ..... 54
**3.4 CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICE ..... 56**
**3.5 FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS ..... 58**
INTERPRETIVE RESPONSES ..... 59
PERSONAL RESPONSES ..... 60
AESTHETIC RESPONSES ..... 61
TYPES OF THINKING ..... 62
*Connection 1: Define ..... 64*
*Connection 2: Combine ..... 64*
*Connection 3: Integrate ..... 65*
*Connection 4: Extend ..... 65*
PICTUREBOOK ELEMENTS ..... 65
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER ..... 67
**3.6 PROCESS OF ANALYSIS ..... 67**
**CHAPTER SUMMARY ..... 72**
**CHAPTER 4 RESULTS ..... 73**
**INTRODUCTION ..... 73**
**4.1 QUANTITY OF RESPONSES ..... 74**
**4.2 INTERPRETIVE RESPONSES ..... 75**
USING THE ELEMENT OF COLOUR AND LIGHT ..... 76
*Types of thinking ..... 76*
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES USING COLOUR AND LIGHT ..... 84
USING THE ELEMENTS OF OBJECT AND SYMBOL ..... 84
*Types of thinking ..... 85*
SUMMARY OF THE OBJECT AND SYMBOL RESPONSES ..... 97
USING THE ELEMENT OF WORDS ..... 98
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES THAT USED WORDS ..... 103
TYPES OF THINKING AND CHILDREN'S INTERACTIONS ..... 104
SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSES IN THE INTERPRETIVE CATEGORY ..... 106
**4.3 OTHER CATEGORIES OF LITERARY ENGAGEMENT ..... 107**
AESTHETIC RESPONSES ..... 107
SUMMARY OF AESTHETIC RESPONSES ..... 110
**CHAPTER SUMMARY ..... 111**
**CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION ..... 113**
**CHAPTER OVERVIEW ..... 113**
**5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS ..... 113**
QUANTITY OF RESPONSES ..... 113
LITERARY UNDERSTANDING ..... 114
TYPES OF THINKING ..... 116
MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES OF LITERACY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND STRATEGIES ..... 117
THE RESOURCE AND THE APPROACH ..... 118
THE IMPORTANCE OF TALK ..... 122
IN THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT ..... 124
*Diversity and inclusive practice ..... 125*

**5.2 DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGY ..... 126**
OVERVIEW ..... 126
THE FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS ..... 127
LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY ..... 129
**SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5 ..... 130**
**CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION ..... 133**
**6.1 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 133**
CLASSROOM PRACTICE ..... 133
FURTHER RESEARCH ..... 137
**6.2 CONCLUDING COMMENTS ..... 138**
**BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 140**
**APPENDICES ..... 152**
APPENDIX A ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL ..... 152
APPENDIX B FLOW CHART OF RESEARCH PROCEDURES ..... 153
APPENDIX C INFORMATION SHEET: PRINCIPAL AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES ..... 154
APPENDIX D INFORMATION SHEET: TEACHER ..... 157
APPENDIX E INFORMATION SHEET: PARENTS ..... 161
APPENDIX F INFORMATION SHEET: CHILDREN ..... 163
APPENDIX G LETTER TO FAMILIES GIVING SOME FEEDBACK ..... 166
APPENDIX H LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION FOR USE OF IMAGES ..... 168
APPENDIX I PERMISSION FOR IMAGES FROM ILLUSTRATOR ..... 169
APPENDIX J SELECTION OF RESPONSES THAT MATCH WITH ILLUSTRATOR'S COMMENTS ..... 170
APPENDIX K EXAMPLES OF RESEARCHER ROLE IN CO-CONSTRUCTED READ ALOUD ..... 171

## List of tables

Table 2.1 *Comparing terminologies about the art elements in picturebooks across different theorists* ..... 29

Table 2.2 *How a narrative can be constructed* ..... 32

Table 2.3 *The four codes of a reader (Freebody & Luke, 1990) as applied to print and image* ..... 33

Table 3.1 *Categories of responses of literary understanding* ..... 59

Table 3.2 *Summary of the SOLO taxonomy* ..... 63

Table 3.3 *Types of thinking for analysis of children's responses as adapted from the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982) and Sipe (2008)*..... 64

Table 4.1*Responses that used colour and light according to type of thinking* 76

Table 4.2 *Responses that used object and symbol according to type of thinking* ..... 85

Table 4.3 *Responses that used words according to type of thinking* ..... 98

## List of figures

*Figure 2.1* The colour red (p. 7) ..... 23

*Figure 2.2a* Bird as object (p. 4) *Figure 2.2b* Shadow as wings (pp. 19-20) ..... 24

*Figure 2.3a* Hand as shadow (p. 2) *Figure 2.3b* Hand in shadows (p. 4) .... 24

*Figure 2.3c* Outstretched hand (p. 11) *Figure 2.3d* Outstretched hand (p. 14) ... 24

*Figure 2.4* Luke's picture and the outside view (pp. 5-6) ..... 26

*Figure 2.5* A typology of picturebooks to explain the range of ways words and images can work together..... 28

*Figure 2.*6 A cognitive model of multimedia learning (Moreno & Mayer, 2000)..... 34

*Figure 3.1* Full range of categories for analysis of responses adapted from Sipe (2008) 67

*Figure 3.2* Literary responses across the categories of literary understanding ..... 69

*Figure 3.3* Children's interpretive responses across types of thinking ..... 69

*Figure 3.4* Children's responses across picturebook elements ..... 71

*Figure 3.5* Children's interpretive responses categorised by four types of thinking and three picturebooks elements ..... 71

*Figure 4.1a* Luke painting (p. 3) *Figure 4.1b* Luke painting (p. 6)..... 77

*Figure 4.2* Colour on Luke (p. 6) ..... 78

*Figure 4.3a* Colours on the stairs (p. 10) *Figure 4.3b* Colour over double spread (p.11) 78

*Figure 4.4* Luke paints colour (p. 3) ..... 79

*Figure 4.5a* Dark Mr Barraclough (pp. 25-26) *Figure 4.5b* Mr Barraclough changes (p.29) 80
*Figure 4.6* Comparing to other texts (p. 6) ..... 81
*Figure 4.7a* Luke happy (p. 6) *Figure 4.7b* Luke unhappy (p. 8) 82
*Figure 4.8* Meaning of colour (pp. 25-26) ..... 83
*Figure 4.9a* Butterfly thing and hands (p. 18) *Figure 4.9b* Bird on a bike (p. 17) ..... 86
*Figure 4.10* Constellation images (p. 14) ..... 87
*Figure 4.11* The emerging creature (p. 18) ..... 88
*Figure 4.12a* Luke's shadow as wings (pp.19-20) *Figure 4.12b* Seeing birds (p. 27-28) ..... 89
*Figure 4.13* Luke's different painting (p. 3) ..... 90
*Figure 4.14* Luke paints what he sees (pp.5-6) ..... ..... 91
*Figure 4.15a* Shadow as large hand (p. 2) *Figure 4.15b* Shadow as wings (p. 29) ..... 93
*Figure 4.16* He paints what he thinks (p. 6) ..... 94
*Figure 4.17* Inside his art (pp. 27-28) ..... ..... 95
*Figure 4.18a* He felt he was all alone (p. 11) *Figure 4.18b* But when he came here ..... 96
*Figure 4.19* Title page with eye ..... 99
*Figure 4.20* Relating left and right (p. 9) ..... 100
*Figure 4.21* Predicting a change (p. 10) ..... 101
*Figure 4.22* Scribble on the bird's beak (p. 18) ..... 101
*Figure 4.23a* I'm free (pp.19-20) *Figure 4.23b* Where am I? (p. 22) ..... 107
*Figure 4.24* Luke's underpants (p. 20) ..... 108
*Figure 4.25* Natalie drawing in response to book ..... 109
*Figure 4.26a* Happiness *Figure 4.26b* Darkness ..... 110
*Figure 5.1* Comparison between Sipe's (2008) original study and this study (by percentage) 128