

**LITERATURE-AS-LIVED IN PRACTICE:  
YOUNG CHILDREN'S SENSE OF VOICE**

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## Dedication

To my parents, Ray and Shirley Pletz  
My brother John and my sister Jocelyn—  
over the years you have supported and listened and encouraged and nourished  
as I create my dreams and pursue my goals.

To my sons, Connor, Brett, and Michael—  
you inspire my life with meaning and passion.

With love to each of you.

## Abstract

This study, situated in classroom practice and grounded in pedagogic wakefulness (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), explores the nature of young children's sense of voice as indicated through sustained interactions and representations of experiences with picturebook literature. The naturalistic research site was a grade one classroom setting in a large urban school. Student engagement and interactions with read-aloud events and responses to literature through multi-modal representations perpetuated meaning making and personal relevance. Coding procedures exemplified the nature of young children's sense of voice as falling into two broad conceptual categories: (1) *Situated Nature* and (2) *Experiential Nature*. The *Situated Nature* of young children's sense of voice revealed *developmental*, *exploratory*, and *social* sites of student engagement to literature. The *Experiential Nature* of young children's sense of voice described three specificities of narrativity in their responses to picturebook literature: Young children's multi-modal responses were interpreted as representative of *Self-Narrativity*, *Interpretive-Narrativity*, and *Aesthetic-Narrativity*. The findings contribute to a reconceptualized literacy curriculum which illuminates personal, social, and cultural identities, especially young children's awareness of their individual sense of voice, developed through picturebook literature in primary classrooms.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Describing the nature of young children's sense of voice through their lived experiences and representations through literature was the impetus for the research study. As teachers of young children, we are encouraged to expand our understanding of picturebooks in practice, including incorporating literature as invitations for critical exploration and for expressing identity and voice.

This study has significant value for classroom practice. As a visual and meaning making experience, picturebook literature allow children to immerse in visually engaging images and texts of today's world, "where the opportunity for developing literacy, literary, and aesthetic understandings is tremendous" (Keifer, 1995, p.7). The implication for advancing the field of literature instruction and aesthetics in elementary education through the study of young children's construction and expression of voice is possible and encouraging. This research holds the potential to be replicated in classrooms where engaging students in a critical and personal lifelong project of meaning through literature is pedagogically relevant and invigorating. Through interactions with fictional picturebooks, young children experienced and represented personal meaning through their interactions with, and interpretations of, literature. What follows is the story of that research.

### *Literature as Lived*

Over the course of seven years as a grade one teacher, I have been captivated by observing young children's development of, and representations of meaningful learning experiences; particularly their active participation as novel interpreters and creative meaning makers about their own lives. It is also the place where my research

interest impels me to study and understand the nature of my pedagogical experiences with young children and their interactions with literature.

My students (my research participants), are five, turning six, in their first year of schooling and the case of literature refers specifically to picturebooks. The power and potential of picturebooks is a lived experience in my classroom. There is a palpable rapture when my young students enter the invitation, then enter again, into self; where their individual imaginative possibilities shine in the midst of their experiences with literature. This broader, richer, and textured opening into literature is a conceptualization made possible by realistic fictional picturebooks.

From this location of personal pedagogy, to another, I am situated in a pedagogic life experienced in the lived-midst of a severe to profound hearing loss. Hearing loss is a phenomenon that is both personal and shared in an educational setting. My lived world of hearing loss is a condition that significantly relates to differences in how I perceive and draw meaning from sound. Articulating the pedagogy of my everyday life in the classroom with young children is a thoughtful and reflective action wherein a different sense of understanding others through hearing loss, is revealed. In the absence of hearing, my reflections of pedagogy, of practice, and of perceiving sound messages differently, can be guided and framed by existential structures for phenomenological description.

This study is situated at the tri-secting juncture where pedagogy and experience of teaching with an absence of hearing meets in practice. Herein the braiding occurs, where enveloping my literacy practice is felt as wakeful and alive. Examination of the nature of my hearing experiences as a teacher-researcher draws

me into a deeper understanding of pedagogy in the field of literacy education and practice as an early childhood educator.

Pedagogical reflections support a conjecture that young children learn and represent knowledge about self and their lifeworld with literature through multi-modal facets of representation. Interest in my students' personal experiences and interactions with picturebooks elucidates invitation and exploration about the nature of young children's developing sense of voice and identity.

The remainder of this chapter will bring out into the open, the merging influences of hearing loss and aspects of pedagogy and practice that formed the background to the study. The chapter will conclude with the research question that guided the study, including terms and definitions used throughout.

### *Pedagogic Thoughtfulness*

A research interest in/with lived experience and the lifeworld of teaching acknowledges 'pedagogy' as a site where elements of lived experience and teaching practice merge. As a teacher-researcher and learner, there exists a connection between the educative applications of pedagogy to research interests. That is to say that pedagogic thoughtfulness, while standing with children, informs my lifeworld as a teacher, my practice, and my lived experience of hearing loss. The duality that pedagogic thoughtfulness explicates is the difficulty in living honestly—the responsibility of 'being' and projecting authenticity is at the mercy of the lived experience all times. I cannot engage in one action without its mirrored impression absorbed and reflected onto the experience with truth.

van Manen (1997) addresses an orientation between pedagogy and research. “To be oriented as a researcher or theorist means that we do not separate theory from life...we are not simply being pedagogues here and researchers there—we are researchers oriented to the world in a pedagogic way” (p. 151). Living naturally in my teaching practice with children acknowledges a weaving and layering of the pedagogic way; with students, research, and my pedagogic situation living with severe hearing loss (SHL). van Manen (1997) describes the relationship of pedagogy, responsibility, knowing, and acting within a phenomenal attitude as “pedagogical thoughtfulness” (p. 154). I interpret ‘thoughtfulness’ in practice as a mode of intentional, genuine, and mindful space in living with children. Heidegger (1962) describes mindful thoughtfulness as a heeding, a caring attunement about the project of life (in van Manen, p. 12). It is here that my pedagogic form holds the effect of drawing my attentive gaze and awareness to the meaning of my experiences, with children, in classroom practice.

Thus, pedagogic thoughtfulness is a way of life, founded in authenticity. It is an attitude that relates and engages reflectively—delving into deeper understandings of teaching and learning. Pedagogic thoughtfulness draws outward a reflective responsibility that links and instills my research experience with truth and action. Situating self in this stance provides the impetus to act in/on the reflective, living meanings of the experience of teaching practice and pedagogy.

Pedagogic reflection related through a phenomenal lens aims to grasp and describe the matter and essential meaning of everyday experience (van Manen, 1996). My effort in grasping and describing the ‘meaning’ is not explicit to merely

‘existing’ within the experience. Rather, as Burch (1986) suggests, my experiences are meaningful once they are grasped reflectively in language, as it is the reflective glance that singles out lived experience and constitutes it as meaningful (in van Manen, 1996). Kirby (1991) restates this through his view of language as not simply the mirror or tool by which we discover our experience, “but is itself an important formative part of that reality, part of its very texture” (p. 2).

### *Hearing Loss*

Hearing loss is a phenomenon of living for some people. It is to say that hearing loss “is a silencing condition that can change persons’ patterns of relating and divest effective ways of giving and receiving messages of sound” (Aquino-Russell, 2003, p. 239). Collins Dictionary (2006) defines hearing as “*n.* the faculty or sense by which sound is perceived” (p. 754). Hearing loss generally results from excessive exposure to loud noise, disease, old age, as well as genetic and hereditary factors. Corwin (1998) refines the latter, reporting that deafness is associated with over one hundred genetic disorders, and at least thirty known forms of hereditary hearing loss. In many of these known forms, generations of families are affected, and often after childhood.

*My sense of hearing was normal in childhood. The incident that brought to light my hearing loss was, in itself, a coincidence of irony. At the age of twenty-three, I was a new BA graduate, hired as an Educational Assistant in a Hearing Impaired program for profoundly deaf students aged six to eight years old. In the early 1980’s, the district audiologist made bi-monthly visits to schools in a fully equipped modified truck with an enclosed mobile sound booth. Because of the young age of our students, the audiologist suggested on her first visit in September, that it would be helpful if the children watch the procedures that occur in the small soundproof, enclosed booth, beforehand. As that volunteer, I experienced their experience. The testing procedure was complete in fifteen minutes. When given the opportunity for a moment*

*afterwards, the audiologist took me aside and asked me if I was aware that I had a moderate and identical hearing loss in both ears?  
(Journal reflection, December 2006)*

Describing and interpreting the experience and meaning of a “different sense of hearing” (Aquino-Russell, 2003) in teaching, is a personal lived-experience that in recent years, surfaced as an opportunity for deeper, reflective understanding. As a pedagogue living responsibly and thoughtfully with young children, the bearing for seeking meaning of my experience of SHL continues to hold professional relevance. Therefore, making explicit the pedagogical essence of the experience of teaching with SHL is an ongoing project of grasping meaning. The language of being that binds me with the world grasps the essence of the reflective glance, which makes explicit the meaning.

#### *Entry into Literature*

As I read, and let fall the closing page of our picturebook, *The Raft*, I am most aware of our attunement together in this real place of silence. Situated within the oration of words and the images of story making, my students’ eyes extol their entry into literature. I witness and live in this palpable landscape; where questing young minds dwell in unknown territories, where time is a wish-telling stillness, where possibility is an endless vista, and where images etch with exacting pixels in our imaginations. While seated in my chair at our story corner, with my students gathered in a comfortable array at my feet, I drift in recollection of Ted Aoki’s (1991) description of dwelling in lived-curriculum as a “sanctified clearing— somewhat like the place before the hearth at home—an extraordinarily unique and precious place, a hopeful place, a trustful place, a careful place—essentially a human

place dedicated to ventures devoted to leading out...to new possibilities yet unknown” (p. 164, in Pinar & Irwin, 2005). It is here, in this trustful and carefully constructed “home”, within a curriculum of literature, that my Grade one students begin to learn about themselves, construct meaning about their identities, and develop new understanding as a mutual ‘shared-ness’ within their unique life experiences.

The experience of literature in the early childhood classroom, in this case, fictional picture books, can be described as an aesthetic and poetic act, an exchange between the reader, teacher, and the listener, student. While reading, I am reflectively aware of my role as teacher who perceives differently, as narrator, interpreter, and reader of text.

Our living-in-curriculum with literature is indeed a curriculum of ‘being’, of openings, and understanding. Young children, when carefully nurtured in a caring climate, supported in our environment of ‘home’ of picture books, and invited into their imaginings and interpretations of themselves and their own stories, become *self-agents* [a way to describe agency of voice and advocacy for location of self within community] of meaning in their own voice. The lightening of unknowns, the freedom of permissions, and the risk of finding voice, is the curriculum of ‘being’ that evolves within each student.

In her pedagogy of an “envisionment-building classroom”, Langer (1998) describes this space as a place “where students have room to form and develop their own understandings, where ideas are explored and supported...it’s an environment

that recognizes that everyone is an individual—with personal as well as group histories” (p. 19).

Here, uncovered and illuminated, is my description of a shared living space between my students, immersed in literature, and myself. At this site, my students are invited into our embodied relationship with fictional picture books. In our secure place with literature, the landscape of our mutual understanding and becoming, of evolving self and voice, is where we belong together.

### *Literature as Sanctuary*

Occupying and living within a sanctified clearing with literature is not a faint descriptor of an accidental outcome or haphazard journey. Rather, the clearing where we assemble is a result of the markings we make on a cumulative path of shared and guided interactions, permissions, and invitations. Together, our markings form luminous strands of presence on our common ground, shared in a community of celebrating individual curriculums. Daring to say, our literature community is not simply named. I often ask myself what makes our entry, our insularity of ‘being’ and ‘presence’, in community here, a differentiated experience from other curricular sites in the classroom?

To explore the notion of entry, I turn to a time during a weeklong visitation at an off-site classroom, immersed in an inquiry-based program at a bird sanctuary in our city. Four months prior, our Grade one team planned and proposed a curriculum of inquiry with our question “*What is a meaningful relationship?*” After the on-site experience, and on return to our classroom one week later, our lives together were punctuated by our common shared experience, offering a profoundly rich and

textured location from which to continue our ongoing inquiry through picturebooks. The reflective phase of our five-day experience off-site also marked an entry into possibility, our curriculum-as-lived. Upon reflecting during discussions on their new understanding of the concept of ‘sanctuary’ my students shared—

a sanctuary is a place where birds are protected  
 we have a relationship with the sanctuary  
 we learned how to be a steward in the sanctuary  
 it’s a safe haven for birds and the animals that live there  
 the birds’ needs are met there  
 it’s a place where people are caring and respect nature  
 birds have a safe home in the sanctuary

(Field notes, Oct. 2005)

The question next was to ask, “If birds can have a place called a sanctuary, can people have a place called a sanctuary?” After a silence that was both heavy-in-wait and full-in-thought, one student raised his hand. “Ms. Pletz, I know where there’s one. My bedroom is my sanctuary.”

In this small voice, these two sentences served as the invitation to our classroom community to explore over the next two months our individual lived-curriculums, new understandings, shared experiences, and identification of our own personal sanctuaries through literature. Unearthing subsequent conversations and discoveries was dramatized through the sharing of poignant fictional picture books as offerings that illustrated the possibilities of a conceptualization and construction of meaning about expressing self and identity.

The emergence of meaning(s) that evolve within the narratives, discussions, and sharing of literature during our uncovering of our personal sanctuaries occurred with my attention to make relevant their own life connections; to not only their shared lived-curriculums of the classroom but also their lived-curriculum in

celebrating self. Finding ‘home’ in literature is a safe dwelling-in together, where my students are guided and supported towards recognizing a new possibility while exploring what might be discovered there about voice and identity. Our common shared experiences brought forward in my students a sense of wonder and imagination through their interactions and interpretations with the text.

I am reminded of Jenna’s personal work with *meaningful relationships*, and her interpretative meaning about her life through understanding *sanctuary*. Jenna established a connection with the picture book, *The Waterfall’s Gift*, using it as a site for imagining and giving light to her own interpretation, her vision for *sanctuary*. The story’s character is an unnamed girl who visits, with her mother, her grandmother’s isolated cottage each summer. Her calling to the waterfall deep in the forest is taken up each visit, with her grandfather’s memory guiding her walk, ever aware of being drawn to the waterfall. In anticipatory calm she nears the waterfall, pulled into it by the sound of the water and the beauty and presence of the natural world where she is so comfortable.

Jenna had identified the waterfall as a place where she felt the character’s peace, and safety, and sense of belonging. In her writing and artistic representation of her own sanctuary, Jenna included these named words and interpreted the meaning of the waterfall as a place, a sanctuary, that had meaning about her life experiences in nature. This brief re-telling of Jenna’s personal path, evolved over a two-month inquiry. Later, on the last day of school, she asked again to borrow the book, *The Waterfall’s Gift*. I watched her take it to the story corner, sit quietly in a space by herself, and slowly turn the pages one last time. She read the pages that were

favourite ones, the ones whose poetic rhythm and very sound had motivated her to learn to read independently. After ten minutes or so, with the other students beginning to drift towards her, I watched her close the book and touch the illustration of the girl and the waterfall on the front cover, a gentle fingertip touch. When she came toward me, with the book in both hands, one hand cradling underneath and one over its cover she handed the book to me and said, “Ms. Pletz, I won’t need to have *The Waterfall’s Gift* to remind me of my personal sanctuary anymore.” Intrigued with what she was working through or resolving, I asked her if she could share with me. She continued, “Well, everything I learned about my relationships and my sanctuary place isn’t just in the book. It’s here, inside me already (at which she touched her chest over her heart). My sanctuary’s my safe haven I know, and it’s been there all the time but I didn’t know it. I can feel it now.” We came together in a hug, and with her in my arms, I could only begin, “Yes, Jenna, it is with you. The waterfall is yours and it’s yours forever.”

#### *Purpose of the Study*

Understanding and describing the nature of young children’s personal, embodied sense of voice through their interactions and responses to picturebook literature is important to early education pedagogy. In making connections and meaning through their personal interactions with picturebooks, young children are invited into their unique and diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Observations of student artifacts suggest that interactions with picturebooks contribute not only to students’ literary understanding of literature (Elkad-Lehman, 2005; Keifer, 1995; Rogers, 1999; Sipe, 2000), but also in more

personal ways to meaning making; “as spaces for learning that can include students’ multiple social, cultural, and expressive knowledge” (Wolf, Edmiston, & Enciso, 1997, in Rogers, 1999, p.140). Field notes and pedagogical reflections support my conjecture that young children learn and represent knowledge-about-self and their lifeworld with literature through multiple facets of representation. Picturebook read-aloud interactions within reader-response experiences provide sustained student interactions through group discussions, writing, and sketch journal entries. Active, meaningful responses to picturebook read-alouds have been found to be one of the most important sites for the formation of literary interpretive communities (Fish, 1980; Sipe, 2000).

Hearing literature read-aloud and responding to literature provides one way in which all my students can engage in their curiosities, their experiences, and their lives. Engaging and responding to literature invites every child’s unique personality, voice, cultural background, and identity, to be nurtured into the open light of their lives. As Greene (1995, p.120) reminds, “our obligation today is to find ways of enabling the young to find their voices, to open their spaces, to reclaim their histories in all their variety.” Young children are offered this opening, in discovering the agency and aesthetic of their voices, through literature. Giving voice to their stories is rendered out of their living in others’ stories in order to recognize their own, in the beginning. Here, where children can see-in and see-out with safety, risks are taken and meanings are made. Greene acknowledges my conjecture (1995) “If we can teach our students to articulate what can be discovered.... and to make it part of the texts of

our lived lives...in relation to the texts we read together, students may then be enabled to read their world differently” (p. 116).

Literature as a voice for ‘being’ is a just and defining location from which to acknowledge how our living with and in each other’s cultural diversities and stories-as-histories is a place where we belong. In a classroom where half of my students are English as second language learners, their voices in community are important to be heard. Many of my students were born in countries where their parents’ and elders’ voices had been culturally silenced for generations. For these members of my classroom, a voice found, expressed, and celebrated through interactions with literature is a poignant and courageous journey of identity. In teaching we find openings, places where we nurture and bring to life a universe of possibility. Living here, within literature offers a key to this universe.

I am interested in exploring my ongoing belief that when our students, even our youngest students, are provided the entrance in to engage in a sustained, personal relationship with self and meaningful picturebook literature, it is possible to awaken powerful inner meanings of voice and identity. ‘Opening their spaces’. where students are supported and respected, provides a comfortable place in literature, where students’ literary understandings and personal interpretations awaken meaning, as voice is heard from the inside out.

### *The Research Question*

The research question for this study is: What is the nature of young children’s sense of voice, as indicated by their interactions, representations, and responses to picturebook literature?

The sub questions, complementary and cumulative include:

- (1) What representations of learning support their understanding of voice?
- (2) What pedagogical practices guide and encourage self-agency and voice in young children's responses to picturebooks?
- (3) What is the role and impact of the teacher's read-aloud style in young children's responses to picturebook literature?

### *Terms and Definitions*

Literature-As-Lived: The dwelling place where I gather with my students— “somewhat like the place before the hearth at home—an extraordinarily unique and precious place” (Aoki, 1986); a rich and textured place within literature where my students' experiences invite them into awareness and understanding 'of-self'.

Sense: In addition to the five traditional faculties by which the mind receives and perceives information about the world or about the state of the body... an internal awareness of understanding and perceiving in advance of, or following the evidence of the senses towards meaning making (Collins, 2006).

Practice: In our shared learning space, reflective practice is a site of action and acting-on lifeworld of self and other, in teaching and learning.

Voice: Stewart, (1972) suggests voice, “is that which sets you apart from every living human being despite the number of common or shared experiences you have with many others; it is not a copy of someone else's way of speaking or of perceiving the world. It is your way” (in Leggo, 1991, p. 143).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Part 1: Seeking Meaning

This chapter reviews the literature that guided understanding and provoked interpretive meaning onto this study. The first part of the chapter highlights the voices in research that provided the foundational ground to the research question. The second part of the chapter provides a location where I develop a sense of meaning making through the literature by interpreting and applying significant research to my lived experience of pedagogy and practice.

#### *Sensing and Perceiving*

In referring to the jurisdiction of sensing and perceiving, Merleau-Ponty refers to a “primacy of perception” (Kirby, 1991, p. 9). Merleau-Ponty’s perception “is not a science of the world, it is not an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xi). “All acts” may be interpreted as acts-as-experiences in which the world, as a study of phenomenon, is naturally and wholly embedded. Perhaps then, the classroom, as background of ‘world’, as invoked by acts-as-experiences, incites a perceptual ‘inter’ act with other as the site of lived experience? The prefix ‘*inter*’ means ‘*between or among; together mutually, or reciprocally*’ (Collins, 2006, p. 843)

Perception, as the background from which all acts-as-experiences may stand out, involves the (inter) act of mutual and reciprocal primacy of perceptions, as sensing between and amongst, self and other. Further, the body, to Merleau-Ponty, is a perceiving expression of ‘being in the world’, of lived experience and living

meanings (Greene, 1980). To perceive the world is to represent it by way of the senses (McIver Lopes, 1995, p.439). Perception of 'being in the world', by way of the body senses then, is a phenomenal character of the classroom-as-world, where all 'acts as experiences' are the background from which life, is derived.

An intentional orientation to life is Husserl's idea of the *lifeworld* (in van Manen, p. 182). He describes the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), as the "world of immediate experience." Husserl's lifeworld is "pragmatic"...toward what is "daily required or obtrusively new." In the phenomenology literature, the idea of *lifeworld* is used synonymously with the world as experienced immediately, pre-reflectively, as opposed to a conceptualization or categorization of the world experienced objectively (van Manen, 1996; Husserl, 1970b, in van Manen; Schutz and Luckmann, 1973). Gadamer (1975, p.239) interprets the *lifeworld* as always a communal world that involves being with other people, whereby the validity of this personal world is always assumed.

The idea of *lifeworld* and van Manen's orientation between pedagogy and research speak to the temporality and lived meaning of the aforementioned pedagogic way and experience. In this way, lived experience within the immediacy and presence of reflective and intentional pre-reflections, is where meaning is derived; a central focus of human sciences.

#### *Young Children's Experiences with Literature*

Research that reports the nature and description of young children's unique (approximate to children 5-8 years old) sense and interpretation of voice as indicated

through their interactions and response experiences to picturebook literature has not been traced to date for this study.

The review of literature that informs the study extends across broad contexts of literary research specific to young children's experiences with literature. In recent decades the field of children's literature has been enriched by several studies examining characteristics and qualities of picturebooks that influence children's construction of literary understanding (Arizpe and Styles, 2003, Keifer, 1995; Lewis, 2001; Nodelman, 1988; Sipe 2000), including a growing category to describe contemporary, postmodern picturebooks (Lewis, 2001; Pantaleo, 2002, 2004).

Research in literary theory, applied to young children's response experiences, particularly reader-response perspectives (Iser, 1978; Langer, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1978) has contributed to the breadth of studies that delve deeper into children's aesthetic and interpretive representations of meaning (Nikolajeva, 2005; Rogers, 1999; Wolf, 2004). Interpretive representations and meaning of young children's responses to literature through discussion (McGee, 1992a; Sipe, 2000; Wolf 2004), writing (du Charme, 1997; Pacquette 2007) and visual sketching (Arizpe and Styles, 2003) provide a foundation from which to explore connections to voice and identity expression. In capturing the relationship of young children's experiences in their quest for making meaning of experiences with literature, several studies focus on teacher practice. The role of the teacher and the verbal environment (Johnston, 2004; Stanulis & Manning 2002), the climate of the classroom-learning environment (Arizpe and Styles 2003; Close, 1992; Keifer, 1999; Sipe, 1998, 2000) and teacher

read-aloud style (Panteleo, 2007; Wolf 2004) address parameters of pedagogy and practice that relate to picturebook literature in the classroom.

*Features of Meaning from Picturebooks*

Picturebooks recognize the union of text and visual image and the unique inextricable connections between the words and pictures (Sipe, 2007). In describing how young children engage with picturebooks, Sipe suggests that the words and pictures never tell the same story—that catching the reader’s attention is the relationship between “resolving the conflict between what they see and what they read or hear, thus entering the satisfying playing field where the reader explores and experiments with relationships between words and pictures” (p. 274). Lewis (2001) suggests that children must find “routes” (p. 32) through the text that connect words and images. The notion that words act as a prompt for further investigation of the page, whereby the child is invited to “scan and interrogate the pictures for semantic links and meaning making” (p. 33). Nikolajeva (2005) describes picturebooks as a special art form in which the meaning is created by the “interaction of information conveyed through two media, words and pictures” (p. 223). In her work with Scott (2001), they go on to outline at least five ways that words and pictures interact in picturebooks:

- 1) Symmetry—the words and pictures are on equal footing
- 2) Complementary—each provides information
- 3) Enhancement—each extends the meaning of the other
- 4) Counterpoint—words and pictures tell different stories
- 5) Contradiction—words and pictures assert in contradictory ways

Arizpe and Styles (2003) emphasize the way pictures and words, whose intimate layers of meaning are “open to different interpretations, have the potential to arouse the reader to reflect on the act of reading itself” (p.22). It appears there is a strong degree of compliance to structural features amongst researchers’ description of the relationship between features and words and pictures in picturebook literature. Further study to Arizpe & Styles’ notion of arousal within the reader on the act of reading itself might include exploring and explaining the arousal of the listener-as-reader during read-alouds.

### *Constructing Literary Understanding*

In reporting young children’s literary understanding, many researchers based their studies on the powerful quality of the visual art of the picturebook. Keifer (1995) reports that pictures support or extend the meaning of the verbal text, while the power of the art evokes emotion as being perhaps “the most significant contribution to children’s cognitive and aesthetic understanding” (p. 12). Nodelman (1988) also explains literary understanding arising from pictures in picturebooks. He states that the pictures act as schema for the words and vice versa. In semiotic terms, Nodelman conceives picturebooks as the site of interaction and transaction in understanding for meaning.

Literature discussions after a read-aloud are a common research site for many who study young children’s literary understanding (Pantaleo, 2007; Sipe, 2000). Arizpe and Styles’ (2003) research focused on how visual texts contribute to young children’s (age four to eleven) literary understanding through group discussion, interview, and drawing in response to literature written by Anthony Brown and

Satoshi Kitamura. The researchers reported that students “were extremely good at analyzing the visual features of texts” (p. 224), while including drawing as part of the data collection provided findings that young children’s representations were “more bold, spontaneous and emotional” (p. 224).

Sipe’s (2000) comprehensive study of Grade one and two students’ literary understanding and analysis of meaning making aimed also to analyze their talk (as interview) during and after read-alouds. Sipe’s study was based on analysis of conversational turns involving 300 readings of picturebooks and culminated in the emergence of five conceptual categories, representing five different facets of literary understanding (p. 264):

- 1) The Analytical—the book as a cultural product produced by authors, illustrators, and publishers
- 2) The Intertextual—children’s ability to relate the text being read-aloud to other cultural texts
- 3) The Personal—children were connecting the text to their personal lives (lives to the text, and from text to their lives)
- 4) The Transparent—children participated in the ‘world’ of the story
- 5) The Performative—children enter the text in order to steer their own creative purpose.

In his grounded theory of young children’s literary understanding, Sipe further describes the connections among the five aspects, as ‘impulses’: 1) hermeneutic impulse, 2) personalizing impulse, 3) aesthetic impulse (p. 270).

### *Reader-response Theory and Perspectives*

Rosenblatt's (1978) literary theory of reader-response focuses on meaning making and the rich interaction, or transaction, between the child and the text. Her work has helped clarify what children bring to the aesthetic process. Transactions that create connections and an alternative reality are referred to as 'lived through', an active description of young children's ability to engage with literature through the dynamic, social construction of the read-aloud.

Iser (1978) views reading as an active dialogue between the text and the reader. Iser argues that readers partially relate the information they get from the text to their experience with real life and to their previous reading. The implication for young children's response to literature is that they come to the reading experience, (as a listener) with a conception of interpretation of the text attributable to past experiences with text and interpretation.

Rogers (1999) explores more recent progressions and perspectives on reader-response theory that focuses on the wider social and cultural context of reading children's literature—relating issues such as power, race, class, and gender influence with how children interact with literature.

Lewis (1997) and McCarthy (1998) also report their research on reader-response perspectives of social context and relationships of classroom to larger cultural and political domains.

### *Young Children's Interpretive Representations of Meanings*

Researchers have found that young children respond to, and represent their interpretations and interactions with literature in a variety of ways. Short's (1992)

research reports that during discussion, young children demonstrated a wide range of intertextual connections to literature in a literary discussion where literature and life were constantly linked. Similarly, Arizpe and Styles (2003) found young children's discussions about literature within a community of readers lead, eventually, to increased knowledge and understanding of issues, intentions, moral ideas, and artistic conventions raised by picturebook literature.

Wolf's (2004) research demonstrates how social influences, culture, and gender are expressed in young children's interpretative talk through picturebook experiences. Applying adaptations of Halliday's (1975) earlier work on functions of language development, Keifer (1995) classified children's oral responses to picturebooks into four categories; informative, heuristic, imaginative, and personal. Pantaleo (2007) says that interthinking (Mercer, 1995), as the link between the cognitive and social functions of group talk, allows children to develop their understanding of themselves and their world. She suggests that all readers have an identity, derived from life experiences, and social experiences where individual thinking is shaped.

According to Wolf (2004), young children who interpret literature through multiple modes of expression enrich their cognitive activity as meaning makers. In collaboration with other modes, children's representations of literature through visual arts enhance not only what they see but how they feel. In studies of young children's interpretations of text, Arizpe and Styles (2003) and Raney (2003) analyzed drawings based on adapted categories: 1) *literal* (basic level of response, 2) *overall effect* (aesthetics of the image) and 3) *internal structure* (composition). In young children,

drawings often showed interpretive understandings they were unable to articulate. Keifer (1995) contends that children's choice to represent meaning through visual art exemplifies how an aesthetic experience can inform a child's feelings and ideas.

As the focus of her research, Pacquette (2007) states that young children's written responses to picturebooks provide a natural avenue to motivate and encourage student interest. Children's responses reflect aesthetic understanding. Attention to voice encourages students to write as they feel through the models provided by picturebook literature. While not confined to young children's responses to literature through writing, the trend in Arizpe and Styles (2003) research indicated that children are better equipped to write about their life experiences and creative imaginings when given opportunities to read and talk extensively in conjunction with written responses to literature.

#### *Picturebooks as Aesthetic Experience*

Nikolajeva's (2005, p. xvii) research on the aesthetics of children's literature relates that mainstream characteristics of aesthetics; such as the way picturebooks mirror our own reality, convey values, and affect the mind. However, Nikolajeva contends that children's literature does have an aesthetics of its own, and understanding how text and image functions and how it affects its readers is the distinction that sets the genre apart.

Literature as an aesthetic experience accepts the role that imagination plays with/in literature, as Greene (1995) stresses, "of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" (p. 3). Greene iterates that accessing our imaginations in order to enter the realities of

children is central to the aesthetic experience. Imagination should be seen as a means by which teachers cross the space between our students and ourselves. 'Poetic use' of our imagination brings into being the "as if" world created by authors (p. 4).

Langer (1953, p. 397) argues for an understanding of aesthetic experience as that which formulates and integrates our conceptions of feeling and visual, factual, and audible reality. "It gives us forms of imagination and forms of feeling inseparably; that is to say it clarifies and organizes intuition itself" (in Keifer, 1995, p.41).

Keifer's research on picturebooks concerns the aesthetic experience of visual literacy. She draws attention to the link between the age of children and their capacity to develop critical thinking through aesthetic qualities of text. Her work also suggests that children's awareness of visual elements opens up their awareness of art and aesthetics.

#### *Role of the Teacher during Read-Aloud Interactions*

Teachers interested in learning from children as well as teaching them are aware of the living spaces they share as they help children interpret the breadth and depth of their understanding of literature. Keifer (1995) refers to the teacher's role in helping children make the choices that will deepen their individual responses. She also recognizes the importance of time in allowing students to fully engage in their interpretive processes with picturebooks. Alternately, Wolf (2004) stresses the meaning of community as a place where teachers and children want to live well. Stanulis and Manning (2002) emphasize the role and importance of a teacher's understanding of the verbal and non-verbal environment structured by the teacher and

of the powerful role that environment plays in establishing norms and influence in the classroom. Arizpe and Styles found reinforcing evidence that positive teacher expectation has a beneficial effect on student learning and engagement with literature. Taylor, Pressley, and Pearson (2002) identify as the characteristic of instructional practice most effective in helping literacy learners promote higher-level thinking by involving students in rich discussions and written responses about their reading.

## Part 2: Lived Interpretations of the Literature

### *Sensing and Perceiving*

Barbaras (2003) and others (Heidegger, 1927; Jonas, 1996; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) account for the existence of life linked to and shaped in contact with perception; they posit a viewing of the lifeworld in relationship to the world, where perception is conceived as *living being*. The existential theme of relationality, in/with other, is to describe and interpret my experience of the lived relation with other in place, such as the classroom. In the absence of hearing, the theme of relationality with 'other' takes into concise terms the negotiations of relating with a different sense in/with the awareness that attunement invokes towards the translations of corporeality of hearing perception and sensing.

Entry into such an in-between space, the place where a different sense of hearing chimes in, is an opening into my bodied experience of hearing. Perceiving that follows where hearing simply fails, is not a stopping and starting of one way of perceiving over another. Through perception, I am already and always bodily with things (van Manen, 1997, p.103). The notion that my body is always with the world,

and not merely as an object in it, is to experience living. Merleau-Ponty's primacy of perception is his argument to the phenomenal body as being-in-the-world (1945); a recognition of the 'bodily liveness' (Greene, 1980, 383) as a "style of being through the body out there with things and other people". Barbaras (2003) takes up Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'living being' and raises it forward to include the phenomenology of perception as leading to a phenomenology of life. He alludes to the meaning of life as being a specific relationship to the world; "we must see it as an existential point of view, as a mode of existing" (2003, p. 160). It is the possibility of perception that lies with/in life, as a vital mode of existing. Given that we all live phenomenally, with/in our bodied existence, as perceivers in a specific relationship with the world then, a thematic 'embodied' sense is not only possible, it is natural to being in the world.

A phenomenological description of this experience allows me to gain an understanding of the nature and the meaning of hearing loss in my everyday 'lifeworld' of teaching. Explicating an interpretation sheds new light, revealing a "more direct contact with the experience" (van Manen, 1997, p.78). This direct contact, though complex and multi-layered, is congruent with structures of meaning that belong to the fundamental structures of the lifeworld (p. 102). The structures of meaning extracted from self-reflective descriptions and interpretations of my lived experience are related (although not limited to) in/with two existential themes: 1) corporeality of perception and 2) relationality with 'other'.

Situated here, in the phenomenal explorations of corporeality (lived body) and relationality (lived human relations) with SHL, lies the later barring of the

interpretative moment. In her comment on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenal body them, Grene (1980) explicates an interpretation on the theme of corporeality, of lived body. Grene relates that the lived body is the vehicle through which we are in the world, whereby the focal point of living meanings is rooted; to be "apprehended as truly being-in, with things, among people, in the perceived world" (p. 383). It is to say that in my lifeworld, my body is the focal point from which I apprehend being-in, the sense and the sensed with other. As Merleau-Ponty (1945, p.62) simply states, "Perception opens a window on to things." Corporeality of perception is a theme for describing the focal point that begins with the lived body; where 'seeing', receiving and interpreting living meanings in the classroom is possible when a different sense of hearing makes the perception of aural sensing difficult or impossible.

In practice, a style of being-through-the-body is an acknowledgement of perceiving wholly as in/with the world. An embodied opening in general, or of aural perception specifically, quite naturally is my way of perceiving my lifeworld.

There are specific instances and events in the classroom each day where my bodily 'liveness' not only describes, but also defines my experiences of perceiving as hearing/not hearing my students. At times, corporeality of perception is as 'knowing'; an enlightenment to aural hearing. At times in difficulty, embodied hearing becomes a lifeline, where grasping for meaning is the mode for existing with my students. In other instances, describing the experience of embodied hearing is an account of noticing space, in order to bring my students closer in...in living a pedagogic way.

### *Embodied Hearing as Knowing*

*When I read picture books to my students in the space we call our story corner, the only perceptible sound sometimes, is my voice, telling the story. Simply enough, the words on the page are read in my voice, clearly and audibly, with the intent that my students, assembled at my feet, may hear the event as storytelling. Yet in this perceiving place between us, there is so much more than merely a one-way discourse. Here, I do not have to physically, aurally hear to perceive my students. This experience marks my entry into the most rewarding and inspiring embodied hearing experience. Embodied hearing perceives all the language, and all the meanings my students show all-at-once. I sense their excitement, their questions, and their hesitations. The way their eyes move between the pages of the story and my face lets me also hear their pauses and invitations as they negotiate new possibilities into their existing framework of textual understandings. I perceive with my body the questions that will surface as the last page turns and the discovery of life meanings that they will bring into their own light for erudition. It is impossible to name all that I hear with my body.*

*(Journal entry, December 2006)*

(Post reflection) Nodelman (1988) describes the pattern of my students' eye movements, between fixing on my speech, and on the face of the page, as the delicate task of putting together information from two sources; the words from my page (in read-aloud) and the pictures on the page. He explains, "The alternation between words and pictures requires constant switches between two different ways of seeing—from a pattern of left-to-right and top-to-bottom" (p.242). In addition, the heightened awareness I have honed to make meaning of voiceless body language is at play during these transactions. The capability to extract information bodily often allows me to be 'a step ahead' of the questions my students ask during read-alouds.

### *Embodied Hearing as Difficulty*

*Embodied hearing has a different meaning rendered from my lifeworld of teaching. Sometimes, I must access every strategy for hearing that I can in every moment. In my grade one classroom, every part of the instructional day is based in/of/for/with words/language/meanings, and connections, as*

*my students become active learners, readers and writers. Quite literally, one hundred percent of our day is spent immersed in language. One of these many submersions includes the multi-layered activities we call 'word work'. Such activities require my students to identify, recognize, articulate, blend, segment, and manipulate English language phonemes. This very place is also my hearing nightmare. In their smallest sound derivatives, English phonemes, in isolation or in parts, are almost impossible for me to comprehend aurally out of context of conversation. While my students engage and play our word games, practice their skills, and build their knowledge of language, they also enter my world of frustration. Generating and playing with word families, (as students chime in their change in consonant onset at the beginning of each word) is most difficult of all. Here, I use many strategies in order to hear; visual lip reading, repetitions, asking for clarification, positioning, sound cues such as "do you mean /b/ as in bob? Or /m/ as in mob? During these activities I secretly feel inept and insecure and inwardly frustrated as their teacher. I try to conceal this difficulty from my students. The embodied messages I perceive from my students add a deeper sense of difficulty. I sense their frustration in not being understood by their teacher. At times, I notice that the tone and level of their voices reflect this difficulty.*

*(Journal reflection, December 2006)*

(Post reflection) In his book, *Seeing Voices*, Oliver Sacks (1989) describes "lip-reading" as an extremely inadequate word for the complex art of observation, inference, and the inspired guesswork that goes on" (p. 132). Notably, during lip reading of young children's speech I lack the full benefit of inference because word work tasks are out of context of normal speech interactions. In isolation, the phonemes, in the smallest units of meaning come to my aural processing as little more than 'best guesses' as a best strategy. The real and felt sense of frustration that repeats itself daily, weekly, and yearly, about teaching in/with hearing loss is carried through, narratively, "working in the research of the psyche.... where adjectives and adverbs with precise power and meaning are studied" (Fowler, 2006, p. 51).

*Bracketed in a Single Breath*

*Bracketed by your sentence that  
erupts in a single breath  
I experience a (dis) connect.  
A flurry of unvoiced consonants pour  
from you as merry escapees-in-taunt,  
their secret assembly into waves  
a mirage-of-untouchables.*

*I hear the shape of your voice,  
the lilting of now unintelligible sounds,  
the tone of your emoted speech,  
But I cannot ascribe meaning to your diction.*

*In this moment-place,  
where sound comprehension fails  
and time compresses,  
where entry into a familiar abyss chimes  
between the next phonemes and  
the words that spill over and around them, here  
I dwell in a different sense of hearing you  
(several times a day).*

*All-at-once  
I follow the largest shapes your lips are making,  
affixing to your cheeks and mouth as they emit their subtle, breathed  
clues  
I gather the true story that your eyes unwittingly narrate  
while absorbing the stature that your verbal body tells  
I ride the moving waves of intonations and denunciations  
I sense what is held in-between the spaces  
of silence—*

*In the absence of hearing.*

*(Pletz, 2007)*

*A Reflective Gaze: Corporeality*

Given that perception is an expression of relationship of being-in-the-world, the experience of embodied hearing is the awareness that my ears are merely one tool in my ability to perceive. By themselves, they are, according to Merleau-Ponty (1945) “an instrument of bodily excitation only, and not of perception itself” (p. 247). The notion that Merleau-Ponty brings to the surface in this statement is the lived knowing that our senses, of which we have many, do not arrive ‘at the thing’ without our thinking, and perceiving consciousness into a meaning of our experiences. In order to know what my body perceives, I do not enlist my eyes to know what I see, or my ears to know what I hear, thus, the caution inherent is revealed in not defining my senses. Instead, my true experience is that my senses distribute through my body all the perceptions that I assign a cognitive power, thereby, “putting perception into the thing perceived” (p.247).

Understanding that every sensation is a “happening, a perceptual encounter” (Toadvine, 2004, p.275) that I grasp, synchronize, and then perceive and assign toward the thing, is solely an interpretation of my lived experience. Knowledge that I am responsibly conscious of my senses as my access to the world brings to the foreground the role that embodied hearing assumes. I have learned and adapted over time to understand that my consciousness of hearing arrives by all the sensations that I have assigned a cognitive power, especially those that interpret meaning when aural perceptions cannot be (appre)hended. The notion of aural sensation, embodied after I take myself back to the awareness of the sound in the first place, is most commonly ‘hended’ in the synchronicity that embodied hearing affords my

consciousness of every given experience. I have developed tremendous trust in embodied hearing. Merleau-Ponty may iterate my experience (p. 250) ... “It is true that knowledge teaches me that sensation would not occur unless my body were in some way adapted to it.”

*Relationality: With Lived Other*

The lived relation I maintain with others in my lifeworld of teaching is to comment on the interpersonal spaces for living I share with my students and colleagues. We share a common ground in our relationship to each other in the classroom and the school. In so far as we share sensory functions, i.e. as embodied, visual, auditory, or tactile information with one another, it is to say that I am already in a relationship of communication with lived other. The definition for *relationship* is “*the state of being connected or related; the mutual dealings, connections, or feelings that exist between two parties, countries, people etc.*” (Collins, 2006, p. 1365). While this definition certainly describes the ‘what’ of the common ground and interpersonal space, it does not explicate the specific focus that I am in ‘relationality’ with lived other with SHL.

To begin to etch out and describe the experience of relating with other in school, I turn to the root word ‘relate’, which means “to tell or narrate a story or information, to establish association or form a significant relationship with other people”. Derived from 16<sup>th</sup> century Latin, *relatus* means “brought back”, from *referre* to “carry back, to bear” (p. 1365).

Bearing the meaning and derivation of the word ‘relate’ I arrive at the beginning. If the derivative of ‘relationship’ is the bringing back, to the essence of

telling of the association, as bound within the narration; as ‘carried back’ with another, then existential relationality is a location from which to extract descriptions of relating.

As a theme of meaning, relating with lived other, at times, is to illuminate hearing as a negotiation, whereby self and other achieve a ‘passing through’ towards understanding or meaning of a thing. At times, relating with other captures a surfacing notion of engaging-withdrawing, whereby the difficulty in relating takes a measured toll. In addition, relating with lived other is always an interpretive act; an essential awareness derived from all sensory acts-as-experiences.

#### *Relating with Lived Other as Negotiation*

*I have a challenging time functioning completely independently in the classroom where specific sound-driven routines and characteristics of ‘at school’ experiences are concerned. Those that prove difficult for me to respond to immediately/instantly even with my hearing aids are outside bell tones, and inside fire alarm tones, and messages on the PA. Of course some sound-driven routines present a safety concern that if taken for its literal meaning, can become in itself an ethical issue. A negotiation concerning this difficulty is necessary on my part. My students play an integral role in relating sound information for me. They are stewards of care that I invest my relating trust in the most. After our beginning discussions about hearing loss in September, there is a turn where the discussion is absorbed into our ethic of care for each other in our shared space. The students take on this role ‘in loco parentis’ with a great deal of pride and maturity. This also occurs in the classroom. For instance, I often make a game out of morning announcements over the PA each day. “Okay, boys and girls, who has best listening ears today? What do we need to know about our day today?” My six-year-old students heartily accept the invitation with hands waving in the air to share the information related over the PA. In our fire drill practices, the students’ first response is the one I respond to—they jump out of their desks in a reflex gesture. Then they announce the sounding of the alarm to me. As I walk under the fire bell in the hallway, I can sense something but mostly I feel the vibrations on my eardrum. These negotiations are sometimes stressful as I am taking personal risks that may easily evolve into judgment and stigma. It takes a lot of work to stay focused on the relation of pedagogy and teaching practice during these times. (Journal entry, January 2007)*

(Post reflection) The way we live in our shared experience of ‘classroom’ is created and nurtured out of our care for each other. Johnston (2004) explains, “although language operates within relationships, language practices also influence relationships among people and consequently, the ways they think about themselves and each other” (p. 9). In addition, language has the ‘ability’ to also structure our perceptions. Harre and Gillet (1994) affirmatively state that “discourse penetrates a fair way into the perceptual system” (in Johnston, 2004, p. 10), thereby suggesting that we perceive and ‘take in’ from each other the responses, the messages, and relating of trust in our living space of the classroom.

*Relating with Lived Other as Interpretive Act*

*Relating with my students, and with others, is always an interpretive act when speaking and hearing are involved. Every person that I interact with in my lifeworld holds a place in my memory specific to that person. This is a ‘bank’ of sorts, a place where I hold vital past information, like a mental ‘file’ of each person’s individual physical and voice characteristics for my later recall. For example, when I am speaking/hearing my student Johanna, I am reminded of the special challenge I have hearing her quiet speech. In my file for her, I am more successful interpreting her speech as I recall her usual patterns of speech; her confusion with /l/ and /r/, her expressive face, her tone for sharing information is different than her tone for telling me about her socializations with peers, and so on. The role that embodied-ness plays in relating and interpreting other(s) is literal at first, however, longer speech acts or those that occur in academic/professional settings always require interpretations that usually require more information. Mistakes are common. Another way I interpret speech while hearing is during phone conversations. When I am listening to the speech of someone that I know, I visualize that person’s speech act as we speak in conversation. This allows me to have the person ‘next to me’ as opposed to ‘not seeing the person at all’. Unfortunately, I make many more errors while listening to a new voice on the phone. I don’t have a file for the person and I cannot visualize an embodied sense of the person I am speaking to. These instances usually result in my having to ask for repetitions, provide apologies for mistakes, or ask to end the phone call until someone can call on my behalf at a later time.*

*(Journal entry, February 2006)*

(Post reflection) As the title of Oliver Sacks book implies, ‘seeing voices’ is a very close description of what occurs when I work at make meaning of speech acts, especially when I do not have the gift of a person’s physical presence. Seeing voices from the ‘bank’ and ‘file’ for relating with other is a personal strategy that Sacks explains in another way. He describes the action we carry out while quiet reading; we imagine someone speaking. As characters on the page engage in discourse in our texts, “we assign voices to them, we “hear” a voice upon the inward ear” (p.134). The poem *Lacings* describes this perceptual experience.

*Lacings*

*My students’ thoughts  
stream together as words,  
through vocal chords that inscribe vibrations,  
launched as undulating sequences of sound,  
fused into chorused, audible meanings  
of textured proportions—  
for me to hear.*

*Simultaneously  
the words that are thoughts  
arrive in their usual way—  
twined with the blessing while on their  
wave-journey of in-between  
A cache of hope released onto them—  
lacing the words and meanings together.  
Chaos and potential meet as I begin my  
ritual of gathering and interpreting  
sound messages  
into meanings.*

(Pletz, 2007)

*A Reflective Gaze on Relating*

The theme of relating with lived other is a phenomena and experience of living. The meaning of the experience of relating in teaching is to recognize the

layered textures of self-other-world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Relating with lived other through a different sense of hearing is the ‘pole’ by which all my perceptions and relations with the world are constituted.

Reflecting on lived experience in teaching is to understand my experience of relating during acts of speaking/listening/dialogue with other at school. In light of this, I have noticed new questions in recent years: *“What are the roles that imagination, visualization, and interpretation play in my relating and understanding of others’ speech?”* This question may be a platform from which to embark on a much longer foray into narrative research for meaning. Greene (1995) provides a springboard in her discussion on imaginative capacity. In my relating with other, the call for imaginative capacity is to perceive and interpret experience as if they could be otherwise. Imagination as a “gateway” (p. 20) through which meanings are derived, freeing me to see “new orders in experience” (p. 19), possibly opens and supports my vantage point of interpreting experiences in/with SHL. Tapping into my imagination may well refer to an ability to see beyond what is fixed while remaining in touch, in presence. Sartre (in Merleau-Ponty, p. 210) simply states, “I visualize...in the world, and my power of imagination is nothing but the persistence of my world around me.” True, the persistence of the world, and relating demands a diligence in noticing the gateways through which meanings are derived.

Making communication possible during difficulty is rewarded in/by my visualizations of the speaker. In practice, understanding students’ speech is made possible by already knowing her/his syntax, body, and vocabulary. Merleau-Ponty (p. 213) attributes this likelihood for understanding due to their certain style with the

‘world’, but more so due to a synchronizing change of my own embodied experience of other.

Lived experience in the classroom reveals meaning that invites mindful explorations into the landscape of pedagogical thoughtfulness and living with SHL. As themes, embodied hearing and relating with lived other, cannot be separated. Each unites in an intricate way a deeper understanding and insight into being-in-the-world as a teacher. The significance of descriptive anecdotes and poetic representations bring my lifeworld into view-to compel, to transform, to erudite essential meanings for reflection.

Human science research is concerned with meaning. “Reflection cannot be unaware of itself as an event, and so it appears to itself in the light of a truly creative act, of a changed structure of consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. xi). The uncovering and explication of experiential meanings of lived experience in/with severe hearing loss, as an autobiographical research account, deepen my encounter with self. Reaching for ‘something beyond’, serves as a progress towards a truth, comprehending in it as a beginning.

### *Literature Community*

In thinking of classroom and community, Greene (1995, p.39) emphasizes the need to incorporate the process words “...making, creating, weaving, saying...” whereby community is achieved by “persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common.” Greene visualizes a community that encourages young children to interpret their experiences in a world they “come together to name” (p.38). In ways of being together then, in community

with literature, we share and attain a mutuality “of reaching toward a common world” (p.39). It is here, in our common world within literature, where the essence of ‘becoming’ through our experiences with it, take hold. As my students and I enter this trustful place, embark, and live in literature, we share this world, learn about each other and identify our individual curriculums as our own.

Jardine and Clandinin (1986) relate their interpretation of the landscape that teachers and students inhabit; a belonging together in community of classroom narratives. With relevance to literature and specific to teaching as storytelling, Jardine & Clandinin refer to “the mutual understanding that develops between teacher and children, as that which the class is about.... where both teacher and children are part of the ongoing narrative of the classroom” (p. 478).

### *Aesthetic Experience*

Adopting a view that children’s literature exemplifies an aesthetic sensation of its own, I then adopt the view that living aesthetically in literature nurtured within, is a world worth exposing and relating with my students—as an aesthetic act, a meaningful experience that bears revealing. In the lived aesthetic act that literature presents, I am an overt witness and participant in the transactional experience between reader and listener, between teacher and student and literature. The importance of recognizing the role(s) we unwittingly assume in this reading relationship is to articulate reflectively the power and beauty of the aesthetic art of literature in practice. Sharing the same pedagogical site as the reader-listener experience lies the imaginative aesthetic(s) and dialogical interpretation(s) where

students enter and illuminate their lived experiences—where what is known and yet unknown dwells.

Rosenblatt promoted an understanding of reading that focused on the transaction between reader and text. She acknowledged the importance of the relationship between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt explains how during the transaction, a “re-symbolization” occurs— a process whereby the reader re-symbolizes her own thoughts with those presented in the text. In so doing, for example, the reader engages in a form of “cultural rewriting” (in Sumara, 1996, p. 27) where construction and reconstruction of thoughts and ideas emerge during the transaction. In the case of reading literature to my Grade one students, I conjecture that two such transactions occur. The first occurs at the point of my reading aloud the text to my students. According to Rosenblatt’s theory, I am constructing my own thoughts and ideas, my cultural rewriting, with the text during the reading. The second transaction occurs between reader and text—albeit vicariously—as my students now construct their own thoughts and ideas through listening to my voice, the storyteller, reading the text. I project an important notion of ‘caution’ rising out of my role as teacher. If during the construction of thoughts, (the re-creating and the discovery of capacities) when the opening to cultural re-writing is postulated to occur, it is implicitly important that, at least, the cultural re-writing is co-created with the students.

Reflectively attuned to this notion is my premise (and promise) that the students are the discoverers and ‘namers’ of the cultural formations, and not merely the echo of my instillations and projections of meaning. Because I am a participant in

our experiences, and part of the story of our classroom, I see my role, as conveyer and teller of the story, not as the ‘controller’ of the story that emerges. Thus the cultural formations, those artifacts of meaning and understanding that we develop together, belong to each of us.

Iser promoted an understanding of the relationship between reader and text (in Sumara, 1996, p.110). Iser’s theory pressed that it is the relational work, the formulation of responses to our reactions to the text that mostly influence the meanings evoked from the text. He understands meaning to be inextricable from the relational activity between reader and text, “ever-evolving in the reader’s lived experience” (p.111). Iser explains that when the reader feels that he is inexplicably living another life through the text, it is due to the fact that we are continually in the process of responding to our own reactions to the text (p.111).

However delicate the connection between Iser’s relational theory and reading of the text and the process by which young children respond to their reactions, I am cognizant and aware that when nurtured in-care, children’s imaginations naturally allow them to inhabit their lived experiences and also understand their reactions to the experience. In this case, inhabiting the reading is a relational experience possibly due to ‘how’ I read the text; emphasis on poeticizing the prose, voice intonations, body language, and vulnerability invite the students to live-in personally with the story, discovering their own capacities to relate. During my reading of the text then, as the students listen, they enter new worlds and lives open and trustful—the gift of “imaginative liberation” (Rosenblatt, 1960, p.315).

### *Meaning Making*

I am aware that as my students enter the meanings of text, they also interpret the meaning of the stories of their lives and experiences. The personalizing impulse (Sipe, 2000) describes how “young children draw the story to themselves and in some way use the story to inform or even transcend one’s own life” (p. 270). Sipe also explains that the personalizing impulse travels in two directions, whereby the reader discovers, “I am like the text. The text is like me” (p. 270).

One of the many factors that contribute to students’ ability to interpret meaning, thereby encouraging the interpretive impulses, is the prolonged conversations and re-reading of picturebooks over time in the inquiry process. In social contexts, the classroom community is open and anticipatory of making meaning, imagining, and grasping new and novel understandings.

As interpreters, Greene (1996, p.4) reminds, “Every one of us inhabits a humanly fabricated world, is mortal and can acknowledge that mortality”....”tapping of these personal perspectives enables a reading of the world differently.”

Two picture books that are perennial favourites in my grade one classroom from year to year are *Weslandia* and *A Bad Case of Stripes*. In the story *Weslandia*, a boy (Wesley) who, in school is bullied and teased for his differences, decides to spend his summer holiday alone creating and nurturing his own civilization in his back yard after a magic seed appears there. In *A Bad Case of Stripes*, a girl who ignores her desire for lima beans in her school lunch, for fear of being different, develops a bad case of ‘Stripes’, a disease that makes her stand out with all manner of imagination as she ‘becomes’ everything in her environment around her, except

herself. The imaginative qualities of the stories play to the ‘what ifs’ that children so magically enter. The message in both stories is ‘be yourself’. My reading, and rereading of these stories, at their request, opens my awareness to not only their imaginations of dwelling in Wesley and Camilla’s respective worlds (and dilemmas), but in addition, I might conjecture that the children are actively processing their own meanings of identity and what it is to feel in-being, comfortable, in-self. Because it is an important topic for consideration and discussion, I respond to these requests and re-visits, with complete respect, knowing that we, as a community are continuing a serious, ongoing, dialogical engagement with expressions of voice and identity.

I interpret my students’ responses as releasing imagination through the reading, where the meanings they derive from all previous experiences find an opening out, for processing once again in their present lived lives. Our coming together, keeping alive the stories with/in literature, is when our real encounters occur.

The power of literature is a shared interpretive and dialogical encounter where teaching is impassioned and students potentially venture beyond where they are. During a reading of a picture book, we are fully present when we understand what is there to be noticed, and what we feel about it. Our multiple visitations of powerful literature allow us to transcend what is first given, and then enter a new field of ‘possibles’, where personal meanings are evoked and connections are drawn.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Amongst Children's Voices

The goal of my research is to describe the nature of young children's sense of voice through their interactions and representations of picturebook experiences. One of the primary means through which to explore my research question is to elaborate and describe my relationship with reflective experiences and attention on/to classroom practice and pedagogy.

The following sections provide a description of the research site, practice, and design methods I used to conduct, collect and analyze data. I describe the school and the context of my classroom as the research site, as well as the young children involved in the research study, referred to as 'the students' from this point onwards. The voices from theory that served to shape and influence my classroom methods also served to inform and ground the methods used in generating and analyzing the data. A discussion in the text presents the criteria I considered in choosing the picturebooks for the study, and a detailed bibliographic description appears as Appendix B. Lastly, I provide a detailed discussion of how I managed the data through levels of coding and analysis of interpretation through themes.

#### *The Research Site*

The study took place in a large (~475 students) urban public school. The fifty year-old school is demographically diverse; economically, culturally, and linguistically. The school is a designated site for Program Internationale (PI), which is a philosophy of curriculum delivery for elementary/middle/junior high aged students modeled after the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. The program

developed by the district, has as its tenet; academic challenge, structured inquiry, languages and cultural instruction, citizenship, intercultural and international awareness, personal development and critical/creative thinking. Character education is delivered through *The Circle of Courage* program. The school is involved in the second of a three-year partnership with two public organizations that support environmental stewardship. The school is a model demonstration school for *Phonic Ear*, a sound amplification system placed in every classroom, while each classroom has a wall-mounted *Smart Board* accompanied by at least two computers for classroom use. In addition, the school is involved in the district and area Alberta Initiative for School Improvement program (Partnerships and Cultural Diversity), which provides curriculum leadership resources for support and implementation of school-based student achievement initiatives through an inquiry model of delivery. Provincial grants support an artist-in-residence program during the school year.

### *The Students*

The class consisted of seventeen students; eight girls and nine boys, at the time the research began in late September 2007. One student visited her native country, India, with her family during the data collection period of eleven weeks. Ten students were new Canadians immigrants born in another country. Three students had Arab heritage, while one student was born in one of the following countries—South Africa, Romania, Australia, China, Greece, and Persia. Seven students were at least second generation Canadian. Forty percent of the students were coded with English as a Second Language designation.

*The Literature Classroom*

The classroom, one of four grade one rooms, is an aesthetic reflection of the age of the school; banks of windows line the full length of the outside wall, and two doors located at opposite ends of the room that open to the hallway. An integral feature of early childhood classrooms is the story corner, the carpeted area where teacher and students assemble. This area is a multi-purpose instructional area—for discussions, sharing, classroom meetings, morning message, calendar math, direct instruction, and read-alouds. In addition to seventeen student desks, the classroom has a large guided reading table in the center of the room, a computer and listening center, and a multi-purpose worktable by the sink area.

The tools of literacy learning and the significant literature collections are noticeable features of my classroom, the research site. On opposite sides of the classroom are three collections of leveled books for the purpose of supporting a differentiated, child-centered, balanced program of literacy learning. Sets of leveled books support Guided Reading instruction, ‘Boomerang’ (home reading), and my ‘Book Baggy’ program. Book Baggies consist of five or six ‘just right’ books kept in the students’ chair pockets at their desks. Students have access to both collections, and through daily and weekly routines and procedures learned at the beginning of the year, the students exercise self-monitored and guided book exchanges. Each of these collections consists of approximately 250-300 books.

The collections of picturebooks in the classroom are part of my larger personal library of 2500 books that I rotate during the school year. My love and passion for picturebook literature defines the over-arching relationship between

students, pedagogy, and myself. Kept in colourful plastic bins, students can choose from a collection of about 300 picturebooks to enjoy at their desks, at the carpet, with a friend, or by themselves. At the story corner, on a shelf behind my chair is another collection of picturebooks kept in 25 magazine file folders that have been categorized by author, curriculum topic, and/or instructional theme. There are approximately 500 picturebooks in this collection for read-aloud enjoyment and instructional purposes. While the students do not have ‘hands-on’ access to this collection due to their location, they experience this collection every day through read-alouds. Situated on the corner of the carpet, there is a floor model bookrack that holds 25-35 picturebooks that are related to a current topic of research, and are there to explore and support student curiosity. The books usually include a mixture of fiction and non-fiction titles. Also at the story corner, are two large bins of ‘treasured picturebooks’. This collection of approximately 200 hard cover, high quality picturebooks is also used for read-alouds and instructional purposes across the curriculum. From year to year, the students experience the books in the ‘treasure’ chest; knowing them as the picturebooks that I cherish and share with highest esteem as ‘gifts for life’ because of the depth of the instructional model, or aesthetic beauty, or life giving-meaning, or artistic example, and always for the treasure of the story itself. Located here, my students are invited into their own journey of life and love for picturebook literature. The diversity and breadth of the fiction and non-fiction collections support all aspects of my program, the curriculum, and my students’ interests and their imaginations.

*Data Collection: Gathering the Voices Together*

The study was conducted over 12 weeks, between October 1, 2007 and December 17, 2007. All aspects of the study were carried out in the classroom during our one and a half hour Literacy block each morning. The exception to this occurred when the students were involved with representing their experiences through sketching and/or visual art lessons. These activities took place over two or three sessions, which were not specific to time of day. During the study period, nine picturebooks were introduced through read-aloud. The students' experiential interactions with these picturebooks generated the data used to explore the research question. By design, a new picturebook was introduced at the beginning of each week, allowing time to interact and experience the book through multiple visitations and modalities over the course of the week.

Multi-modality describes the ways in which learners make meaning of their world. Booth and Rowsell (2007) refer to the multiple ways of making meaning from different elements of texts and from all kinds of 'texts' (p.52). Observing my students make meaning about their lives through their representative texts of picturebook experiences reflects the pedagogical ways of working in experiential modalities. Methods of collecting data included:

- Sketches (response to read-aloud)
- Art lesson/visual art response
- Small group interviews
- Individual interviews
- Listening Behaviour checklist – of students during read-aloud

- Video taping

The evidence for trustworthiness for this study is noted throughout by the multiple means of data collection, and their appropriateness to the research processes involved (Winter, 2000, p.7). The processes chosen provided a strategy for uncovering, viewing, and drawing meaning about young children's sense of voice through the multiple vantage points. In this sense, internal triangulation was attended to by the multi-modal methods for data collection, producing a more complete picture of discovery (Schwandt, 2001).

As the teacher and researcher I wholly recognized the privilege of being in community with my students and the prolonged observation period and persistent engagement afforded by this circumstance. Throughout the course of the study, I continually attended to appropriate verification procedures (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, in Glesne, p.37) specific to data collection from children; these included prolonged engagement, persistent observation, multiple data-collection methods from multiple sources, and thick description. These actions maintained my focus on trustworthiness, from the data collection stage continuing throughout to the interpretive analysis of the data.

Choosing picturebooks that invite young children into an exploration of self (with the outcome being an expression of their distinctive voice) is to recognize how particular characteristics and qualities of picturebooks (Nodelman, 1988; Lewis, 2001; Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Keifer, 1995; Hunt, 1999; Nikolajeva, 2005; Sipes, 2008) provide a 'hook' of engagement. The research that grounded my theoretical foundation and understanding of how picturebooks 'work' is outlined in Chapter

Two. My aim here is to describe how my practical application of the research and my lived experience informed the methods I used.

Young children enter the picturebook read-aloud through visual and aural perceptions of the word and the image simultaneously. As reported in the research, and consistent with my experience of observation and discussion with students, the particular qualities of word and image that appear to ‘transport’ young children’s entry into the picturebook are a key understanding in my research. Students’ engagement appeared to enter, then precipitate a curiosity about, and into, their own personal experience. This is the location where I am able to nurture curiosity out into the open, where it can then be explicated and excavated as a tool for seeing and knowing ‘self’.

For this study, I applied my practical observations and translated them into identifiable characteristics of picturebooks that appear to awaken, and then open this window into seeing ‘self’ and ‘life’ with picturebooks. Each of the picturebooks chosen for the study exhibits a majority of these characteristics:

- The students perceive the main character as being the same age
- The character shares or demonstrates common, plausible experiences and/or feelings with the students as if in ‘real-time’ (eg. Life at school, belonging, family, joy, courage etc.)
- The character’s gender is not interpreted as defining a specific-to-gender activity; boys and girls alike can see themselves in the actions and activities of the main character, regardless of gender

- The character is involved in an altruistic or social issue that students aspire to see in themselves, or as a role model
- The text and/or image invites the students into word play and/or humour
- The text prompts the reader to ‘bring’ the text alive with demonstrative intonations and speech emphasis
- Students experience and perceive a vulnerability
- Close synergy between the text and the illustrations allow the students to visualize and construct vivid personal meaning during the read-aloud
- The text engages young children’s imaginative propensities.

The detailed, annotated bibliography of the picturebooks used appears as Appendix B. For purposes here, the title/author of each picturebook, the order in which each of the picturebooks were introduced and read between October 1 and December 17, 2007 and the multi-modal ways that the students interacted with the text is stated. In addition, the general theme of each picturebook is included.

Table 1.

*The Picturebooks and Multi-modal Ways of Representing*

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1. *Babuska’s Doll* (Patricia Polacco; 1995)
  - Sketch
  - Small group interview (4)
  - Video tape of read-aloud
  - Listening behaviour checklist
  - Individual interview

Theme: Care and Respect

2. *Edwardo the Horriblest Boy in the Whole Wide World* (John Burningham; 2006)

- Sketch
- Small group interview (3)
- Video tape of read-aloud
- Listening behaviour checklist
- Individual interview

Theme: Power of Words

3. *A Bad Case of Stripes* (David Shannon; 1998)

- Sketch
- Small group interview (3)
- Individual interview
- Video tape of read-aloud
- Listening behaviour checklist

Theme: Individuality

4. *Oliver Has Something to Say* (Pamela Edwards; 2007)

- Sketch
- Student writing response (independent)
- Video tape of read-aloud
- Listening behaviour checklist

Theme: Self Advocacy/Voice

5. *Matthew's Dream* (Leo Lionni; 1991)

- Art lesson/formal art representation (individual response)
- Video tape of read-aloud
- Listening behaviour checklist
- Individual interview

Theme: Dreams/Setting Goals

6. *Lily Brown's Painting* (Angela Johnson: 2007)

- Art lesson/formal art representation (individual response)
- Video tape of read-aloud
- Listening behaviour checklist
- Individual interview
- Theme: Honouring Imagination

7. *Wanda's Roses* (Pat Brisson: 1994)

- Sketch
- Small group interview (2)
- Video tape of read-aloud
- Listening behaviour checklist

Theme: Environmental Awareness/Activism

8. *Courage of the Blue Boy* (Robert Neubecker: 2006)

- Sketch
- Small group interview (2)
- Video tape of read-aloud
- Listening behaviour checklist

Theme: Courage/Acceptance/Belonging

9. *A Story for Bear* (Dennis Haseley: 2002)

- Sketch
- Video tape of read-aloud
- Listening behaviour checklist
- Individual interviews

Theme: Gift of Reading and Read-aloud

*The Read-aloud.* The picturebooks were presented and shared as a read-aloud event at the story corner. Each of the nine picturebooks was introduced to the students in the same way as per the routines of classroom practice. While displaying the front of the book, the characteristics of the picturebook, cover and endpages are shared for discussion. The students develop skills for gathering information and making discerning connections through modeled book talk and book routines. Sharing background knowledge about the author and illustrator, or in some cases, the author/illustrator, encourages the students to become familiar with recognizing familiar features with the 'human' connection, to the real person who writes for our enjoyment. For example, my students are easily drawn into Leo Lionni's life of curiosities, learning that, as a boy he kept small animals as pets so that he could learn and study their habits. They are equally captured when they learn that as an author/illustrator Lionni's stories often reflect his passion for his pet mice as inspiration for writing his timeless stories. Similarly, when the students learn that David Shannon is the author of the *David* series, they are easily captivated by the connections in memory to the humour and style of writing in *A Bad Case of Stripes*.

At the same time students are prompted to notice the visual information on the front cover and the endpages— a discussion designed to gather information, make conjectures and predictions, examine characters, and the meaning of the words within the title.

The month of September provided the time to develop routines and procedures with the students that would reflect the tone and habits of our read- aloud sessions. Out of these discussions, and through reading picturebooks, the students reflected on what they liked best, and how they wanted to experience their read-aloud sessions. The most significant decision they made related to my behaviours in scaffolding literary understanding during the read-aloud. In the first month of school I allow for talk and discussion during the read-aloud which enabled me to observe how students were interpreting and expressing verbal understanding of text and illustrations. This practice meant that I usually read, stopped to discuss, and read, again—on average the pattern repeated itself two or three times during the read-aloud. While I collect valuable information about how my students were developing and acquiring understanding and comprehension of the text, the students expressed their desire to change these beginning-of-year practices. The students decided that they didn't want the first reading of a picturebook to be interrupted. From my field notes:

*“While reading and discussing ‘Chrysanthemum’ by Kevin Henkes today, Taylor put up his hand and said, ‘I like it when you read all the way to the end of the story, instead of stopping.’ Our discussion opened about Taylor’s comment and it became apparent that others echoed his view. Kaya followed by saying that she didn’t like the story to be interrupted the first time because ‘I don’t like switching from listening to thinking and then listening, it’s better to listen all the way through the story.’ After hearing many thoughts our decision held that during first readings of our picturebooks I should not interrupt the reading. This interests me, as it reminds me that establishing routines and procedures for each year, for each group of students is a negotiated enterprise, and I shouldn’t take practice for granted as being the ‘only way’ to work. I appreciated Taylor’s opening for discussion. It provided an excellent opportunity for the students to share their investment into how they wanted to learn. I will incorporate this information into my research design..*

*(September 25, 2007)*

Throughout the study period, the first reading of the picturebook was only interrupted if a query was student-driven. In these instances, the appropriate time to share and discuss students’ in-the-moment questions was incorporated into practice. The discussions that followed all readings provided the outlet for wondering, clarifying, constructing, performing, creating, and interpreting meaning. The second reading of all nine picturebooks usually occurred at a later time in the day, or the next day.

The subsequent readings of the picturebook occurred with and continued after the second read-aloud. The sustained dwelling in place with the picturebook, over the course of a full week, provided the multiple entries into personal explorations of self and voice. The ethic of care in our community, with literature, was developed through our interactions and the sustained experiences with the books.

*Sketching.* As another form of literacy, students communicated meaning making through their sketches. While guided by evidence and understanding of Parson’s (1987) developmental stages of aesthetic responses to art, I found myself

more captivated by what ‘the story’ in the students’ sketches might reveal about their sense of voice. Rather than interpret the sketches based entirely on developmental cues, such as attraction to colour, subject association, or viewpoints, I was drawn to focus on the whole. Making sense of the whole piece of work took into consideration the students’ unique expressive style of response, the sensing relationship I had with each student, and the deeper sense of the ‘story within the story’ of the sketch.

Therefore, documenting the students meaning making through sketch experiences included a ‘drawing-telling’ component (Wright, 2007). Drawing-telling gave the students the opportunity to create and share meaning using verbal (talking about) and non-verbal (imagery and bodily-kinesthetic) modes of communication. The relationship between the act of sketching their experience with the picturebook and their telling on the sketch represented a multi-faceted expression as a distinctive voice of ‘self’. The telling sequence of the drawing-telling response occurred after the second read-aloud of each picturebook.

Students sketched responses for seven of the nine picturebooks used in the study. The two picturebooks not included in this form of data collection were *Matthew’s Dream* and *Lily Brown’s Paintings*. These stories were chosen for a more in-depth study of visual art representations of students’ interactions with the picturebooks.

Each student had a 100-page coil bound, 9” X 11” sketchbook. In my practice, sketches are spontaneous interpretations of the mind’s eye. The students did not use an eraser when sketching and the sketching event was not an art lesson. Students were invited to use the space on the page in their own way. Sketches were

done in pencil and when time permitted, the students made decisions about whether they wished to colour their sketch. After the second read-aloud of each picturebook, which included the class discussion, the students' engagement with sketching was their first individual, record of all interactions with the picturebook.

Prior to each of the seven sketch responses, the students were presented with guiding questions (see following page). The students' responses demonstrated their ability to use the question as a tool to focus their thinking process and engage in the sketch-becoming-story.

Two of the seven sketch sessions were presented to students in a slightly different format. On these occasions the students were invited to sketch during the second read-aloud. The purpose of this was to observe how the students engaged with the character's experience as a stimulus or invitation into their own experience. For these two picturebooks, students had their sketchbooks on their lap at the story corner, during the second read-aloud of the story. The students sketched throughout the reading and the reading was not disrupted for discussion.

The questions posed for each of the sketching activities were designed to mete out the characteristics of Sipe's Personalizing Aspect of literary understanding. Based on the categories of 'text-to-life' and 'life-to-text' connections (Sipe 2008), the sketch data represented a balance of responses from each of the two categories. The two sketch sessions that involved the students sketching during the second read-aloud at the story corner are identified with an asterisk in the figure below. The general guide to conversation leading into the sketching activity can be deduced by the questions for each story.

Table 2.

*Guiding Questions: Sketching to Picturebook Read-Aloud*

Picturebook	Guiding Question(s) Sketch	Personalizing Aspect
Babushka's Doll	"What did Babushka's doll teach Natasha that we could learn from too?"	Text-To-Life
Edwardo the Horriblest Boy In the Whole Wide World	"Draw a picture of a time when you feel like Edwardo."	Life-To-Text
A Bad Case of Stripes	"Draw a picture of the time during the read-aloud when you wanted to tell Camilla 'to just be herself' to be cured."	Text-To-Life
Oliver Has Something To Say	"Draw a picture of what you would feel like to have Oliver's problem."	Text-To-Life
Wanda's Roses *	"If you could think of a way to help your world, like Wanda did, what would you do?"	Life-To-Text

Courage of the Blue Boy*	“Sketch a time when you needed courage in your life.”	Life-To-Text
A Story For Bear	“Sketch yourself. Where is the be the best place to have a read-aloud?”	Life-To-Text

*Visual art representations.* Expressing experiences with literature through the visual arts was a way to honour opportunities for the students to imagine new connections and new meanings (Greene, 2007) about themselves. Engaging students’ imaginations through their art experiences opened a window onto possibility; they fostered meaning making and interpretations of ‘self’ that provided freedom and presence (Greene, 2007) in expressing their ‘voice’.

Two picturebooks, *Matthew’s Dream* and *Lily Brown’s Painting*, were included in an integrated arts inquiry incorporating Language Arts, Science, and Art objectives into the study methodology. In context, this research was based in practice, and thus, the invitation to incorporate multiple theoretical arts perspectives of my practice into the study contributed to the richness of the data, and strengthened the trustworthiness of the research. The multi-modal activities provided a verifiable, triangulated series of data where students explore their self-awareness and expression of ‘voice’ through visual arts. The themes of the two stories, ‘dreams and goals’ and ‘creative imagination’ provided the opportunity to generate both highly interpretive and personal responses.

The students were engaged in connected, multi-modal, and interpretive activities for each picturebook. Incorporating interpretive understanding as a response to literature honoured students' relationship to their individual 'ways of knowing' about themselves with the picturebook. The activities included open-ended questions (e.g. What is imagination? Why do you have imagination? What does it mean 'to dream'?), art lessons (multiple techniques/multimedia), personal reflection (interview), and personalized telling (e.g. Naming the artwork and identifying 'self' in the work). For each of these picturebooks, the multiple interactions and representations of the story involved several sessions between Monday and Friday. The typical sequence of lesson development for a longer interpretive inquiry with literature followed a general path, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3.

*Multi-modal Plans: Matthew's Dream and Lily Brown's Painting*

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Lesson Development: <i>Matthew's Dream and Lily Brown's Painting</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First read-aloud</li> <li>• Discuss literary understanding and personal meaning within story</li> <li>• Raise open-ended questions (introspective/reflective)</li> <li>• Brainstorm and chart/web student responses</li> <li>• Second read-aloud (students invited to visualize 'self' in the character's position)</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students create mind map of visualization—interpretative exercise informs ideas before engaging in the art sequence.</li> <li>• Students share and talk about their interpretation (informs art) with a peer.</li> </ul>
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Art Lesson: <i>Matthew's Dream</i>	Art Lesson: <i>Lily Brown's Painting</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mini-lesson review: Line family</li> <li>• Visualization of their dream through pencil</li> <li>• Science concepts: primary and secondary colours</li> <li>• Painting with tempura</li> <li>• Use of space, use of contrast</li> <li>• 3 dimensional paper cut out of 'self' (inserted into art work)</li> <li>• Interview: Personalizing aspect (drawing-telling)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visualization exercise: imagination</li> <li>• Sketching: use of space</li> <li>• Mini-lesson: water colour brush techniques</li> <li>• Science concepts: opaque and transparent</li> <li>• Painting with watercolours (2 sessions)</li> <li>• Mini-lesson: contrast (using black)</li> <li>• Interview: Personalizing Aspect (drawing-telling)</li> </ul>

*Small group interviews.* Interviews were included as a method of data collection because they provided me the opportunity to collect specific and focused information (Schwandt, 2001) through set questions for each picturebook experience that fit the research question (Glesne, 2006). In the classroom with young children, the naturalistic setting was ideal for sharing their thoughts, experiences, and perceptions of their experiences with literature. Group discussion supported students' social construction of meaning (Vygotsky, 1978); each was heard authentically in their own voice. I noticed that the small group interview, consisting of two to four students, provided an avenue for the students to express themselves with more emboldened talk (Glesne, 2001) on their personal experiences with the picturebook. As a reciprocal exchange among the students and myself, each student experienced a closer space to listen carefully to the ideas of others.

The interviews were conducted after the second read-aloud and after the sketch response. By this time, students had created their own interpretation of their personal meaning through the experience of the sketch. In the same manner, personal meaning often resulted from taking first steps of risk taking with more comfort and confidence while sharing with small numbers of peers.

Each group of two to four students met me at the back table while K.K. (our student teacher) supported students working at their desks. Each interview was comprised of structured open-ended (Schwandt, 2001) or scaffolded questions asked in the order they appear below. Student responses were recorded word-for-word on my laptop as a *Word* document. To address reliability in responses, I repeated students' replies back to them as a safeguard measure against incorrect hearing

comprehension. In addition, I asked students to repeat their response as another strategy to correct for the possibility of incomplete aural comprehension. The interview consisted of three or four questions; a pedagogical decision based on experience of young children's shorter, developmental attention abilities. The groups answered the same questions, and each member answered each question. Appendix C outlines the research questions asked for each picturebook, and displays in brackets, how many students were interviewed.

*Individual interviews.* The purpose of the individual interviews was to gather data that documented students' individual voices and the many perspectives (Glesne, 2001) they offered. The times spent with each student allowed me to not only record their unique and personal meanings, but also to observe their non-verbal 'bodied' responses to the questions. 'Bodied' responses refer to the physical and emotional manner/stance that each student presents to me. My awareness and sense of this information is another aspect of knowing my students. When students answered interpretive or reflective questions, their bodily responses were as revealing as their verbal responses. This information was noted in my field notes at the same time that I recorded their word-for-word replies. Describing the nature of young children's sense of voice was, in some cases, revealed more so by their behaviours (Glesne, 2001) and 'bodied' reactions at the time of the interview than by the language they attached to their experiences.

Every student experienced an individual interview three times during the study, for a total of 48 interviews. Each interview consisted of three or four questions, and followed the methods stated earlier. Individual interviews occurred at

the beginning, middle, and end of the study. In the first interview, the students responded to their first sketch and answered questions related to the life-to-text and text-to-life aspects of their personal experience with the first picturebook presented in the study. The second interview occurred during the middle of the study when the students were engaged in the weeklong arts-based representations and study with *Matthew's Dream* and *Lily Brown's Painting*. The focus of the open-ended questions asked the students to remark on their personal process in creating the artwork and secondly, to reflect and respond to the piece as interpreter. The final interview occurred during the last week of the study period. The questions posed allowed the students to reflect on read-aloud experiences and their interactions with picturebooks. Through this schema of interview at the beginning, middle, and end, I was able to trace and document individuality in each student's responses. Tracking each student over time provided a rich description and analysis of how each student's experiences, and their phenomenon of 'voice', evolved and internalized over time.

Table 4.

*Research Questions: Individual Interviews*

Babushka's Doll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the story in your sketch?</li> <li>• What is different when you tell? When you sketch?</li> <li>• What part of your sketch tells the most?</li> </ul>
Matthew's Dream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the dream you see inside your painting?</li> <li>• What do the colours mean to you?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does your dream say about you?</li> <li>• What is the title of your painting?</li> </ul>
Lily Brown's Painting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is imagination?</li> <li>• What did your imagination paint?</li> <li>• How are you like Lily Brown? Or not?</li> <li>• What did the story make you feel about your own life?</li> </ul>

*Observational behaviour checklist.* The observational checklist on read-aloud listening behaviours was designed as a method to gather significant non-verbal (Neuman, 2007) behaviours during read-aloud events. The observational checklist was a tool to record, in context with specific terms (Neuman, 2007), what students 'do' during the read-aloud event. The students' non-verbal engagement behaviours demonstrated specific communicative gestures, facial expressions, and eye gaze information that, when interpreted, revealed meaning about engagement during read-aloud events.

In designing the Observational Behaviour Checklist (see Appendix A), I decided on two domains for observation: engagement during read-aloud and behaviour during read-aloud. Within each domain, I was interested in recording 'how' students attend, and by what aspect of bodily means they engage with the picturebook reading. The checklist also provided the means to record engagement and behaviour by gender, and by the numbers of students demonstrating these behaviours at one time.

The checklist was the only form of data collection during the study period that transcended the boundaries of the nine picturebooks involved. Because the checklist was not a primary source of data, and was instead, a tool to explicate richer observations of behaviour, I decided that the checklist could be applied to all picturebook read-alouds during the study period, and not just the nine picturebooks during which the students' interactions were closely recorded. From an analysis perspective, the checklist provided a means by which I could examine my practice reflectively, and note any relationships between teacher read-aloud style and students' embodied responses.

The opportunity presented itself to include my student teacher K.K. into this aspect of data collection. Together we discussed the checklist and qualified our own observational behaviours in order to consider possible individual subjectivities. Over the course of the 12-week study, K.K. conducted the checklist during the read-aloud of the nine picturebooks. And likewise, during read-aloud events when K.K. was reading, I conducted the checklist of students' behaviours and engagement levels. For this study, only the data generated through observing the nine picturebook read-alouds were considered for analysis.

*Video recording of read-aloud events.* Video recording the read-aloud events was invaluable as it enhanced my observation (Glesne, 2001) and allowed me to focus directly on read-aloud interactions repeatedly, as a permanent record. This method provided a rich chronicle of students' initial verbal/non-verbal and spontaneous responses to each picturebook and a log of the discussion that followed the reading.

Video recording each of the nine picturebooks occurred during the first read-aloud. Due to the physical layout of the classroom and the restricted access to electrical outlets in an aging school, only one camera could be used for the recording. The camera was placed on the same counter behind my right shoulder during each read-aloud event. This consistency helped the students to eventually shift their attention from the camera to the read-aloud. From this position, the camera captured in image, the front of the students' faces, while my voice could be heard reading.

Five of the nine picturebook tapings were chosen for transcription. I was assisted in this task with two other adults who listened to the tapes alongside me. For reliability measures, the transcribers worked together, checking and re-checking the students' conversations until they were satisfied that their transcriptions were accurate. Through repeated browsing they judged the five tapings adequate in sound quality to generate the transcriptions. When the students' voices were too faint or inaudible and therefore would jeopardize the validity of this aspect of data collection, they were omitted from the data records. Because several student speakers needed to be identified for their respective voiced responses, I followed Sipe's format by using the conversational turn (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975, p. 231, in Sipe, 2000) as the unit of analysis. In this method, "everything said by one speaker before another speaker begins, is transcribed and assigned. The transcriptions of discussions occurred over a taping period of approximately ten minutes following the read-aloud.

The students' discussions included sharing of background knowledge, their developing notion of story elements, making predictions about what might happen 'outside' the pages, and oftentimes, the students talked about their own experiences.

In leading the discussions, my questions framed my students' location, first by acknowledging their current affirmations of understanding the text, and next, to scaffold and extend this knowledge base.

*Data Analysis: Voices Revealed*

Guided by the research question, analysis proceeded with organizing, reducing, and describing (Schwandt, 2001) the large mass of data I collected. Neuman's (2007) tri-leveled framework for processing data—open coding, axial coding and selective coding, were used throughout the course of describing and interpreting the drawn conclusions.

Prior to open coding, all raw data generated through individual interviews, drawing-telling events, and small group interviews were broken down into component speech parts, such as a sentence, that either stood alone or combined with a related group of transcribed speech acts. This meant that the conditions that framed each context of the data collected for each of the methods employed would serve to identify and classify the relevant parts of the data. At this point, all pieces of relevant data reflected personalizing responses to the picturebook. This was a primary means of extracting and reducing data from the larger mass. All other raw data were retained for their value in describing other aspects of literary understanding, as in many instances, these data contributed to the context of storying.

To facilitate my work with a coding scheme, I developed a series of subcodes (Glesne, 2006) that provided an organizational ground to the source of each 'piece' of data. In addition, the jot notes that refer to the subcodes served also as a verification procedure (Creswell, 1998, in Glesne, p. 37); as a tool it served as

‘action-on’ the validity throughout the analysis phase. The subcodes devised reflected the method/source/context of the data.

Table 5.

*Subcodes Assigned to Data*

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Subcodes Assigned in Data Analysis

RE	Reflection
*P	Personal connection
SK	Sketch response
AC	Action (as self agency)
I	Insight or Inform
*V	Distinct Voice
G	Gender
B	‘Bodied’ Response

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My approach to open coding at this juncture of data analysis was to return to the Sipe’s (2008) grounded theory model of young children’s literary understanding, which describes how young children engage in different types of meaning-making responses on their evolving path of literary understanding. Of particular interest to this study is Sipe’s *Personal Aspect of Literary Understanding*, which illuminates young children’s impulse to link events or characters in a narrative with their own lives. In general descriptive terms, Cochran-Smith (1984) calls these connections “life-to-text” and “text-to-life” (in Sipe, 2008, p.152). Here, the text acts as a

stimulus; where the reader connects the text to his/her own life, moving either from the life to the text or from the text to one's life.

The *Personal Aspect* in Sipe's (ibid) theoretical framework is based on his research indicating that recognizes that in ten percent of all conversational turns children represented a personalizing connection to the picturebook read-aloud during oral discussion. This finding acknowledges my classroom experiences with students as they interact with picturebooks, where a sustained interaction with picturebooks that encourages and invites students to make meaningful, personal interpretations is in practice. As a grounded theoretical guide, Sipe's model provided a useful organizational tool from which to extrapolate categories and then explore the stimulus that awakens young children's experiences and awareness of their own sense of voice. It was my intent to increase, extend and develop the children's experience of personalizing their connections with picturebook interactions, in order to illuminate the nature of young children's sense of voice.

Table 6.

*Open Coding Categories Assigned to Data*


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 Open Coding Categories: Life-To-Text

SC—Recognition of story to aspect of own life

TS—Students become the storyteller

In—Identify with character/Interpret personal experience

CR—Links between Character and Self-Experience

## Open Coding Categories: Text-To-Life

AS—“I would” / Inform

BL—Stories as Malleable, blur personal life with self as author

AU—Helps Deal with Life Experiences

Im—Connection to Imagination

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In order to generate a hands-on archive of the coding process that could withstand many manipulations, I devised a system of working with the data. I recorded data fragments (usually as one sentence) onto strips of paper. In this way, one piece of raw data was recorded on one strip. Each strip was identified with a subcode, the picturebook source, and whether produced by a male or female. Continuing in this linear fashion, the data collected and compiled for each picturebook in the form of data strips, represented the data to be sorted and categorized during open coding. After relevance to personalizing responses was extracted, the number of strips that were sorted into categories was 232 data strips in

total. Large sheets of manila tag were labeled with the eight categories used for open coding. Lastly, as coding was completed for this pass, I assigned each category a colour, which was visible on each strip. This allowed me to always re-frame and confirm the data strip to its categorical origin during shifts and reassignments. This attention to the analysis process reflected my cautionary gaze onto potential subjectivities with the data.

Jot notes and field journal entries taken during data collection acted as sentinels of consciousness throughout the coding process. Because they were generated in the immediacy of context and with the perceptual acuity shaped through observation, they proved invaluable as I approached the second pass (Neuman, 2007) of axial coding. This pass through the data stimulated my thoughts as I looked for linkages between the categories and the themes that emerged. I was also aware that the themes were beginning to reveal evidence about qualities that could be describing the nature of young children's sense of voice.

At this point in axial coding, I was focused on how the connections between the emerging core themes were strengthened by their apparent repetitions (Neuman, 2007). In order to visualize the core themes emerging I identified repetitive instances from each category (see Appendix D). The highlighted fragments represent multiple instances of core themes that were indicative of recurring evidence for further analysis.

A number of themes were identified by the time I completed axial coding. I was beginning to organize the core themes that emerged through one more pass of selective coding (Neuman, 2007). I was now noticing how major themes in this level

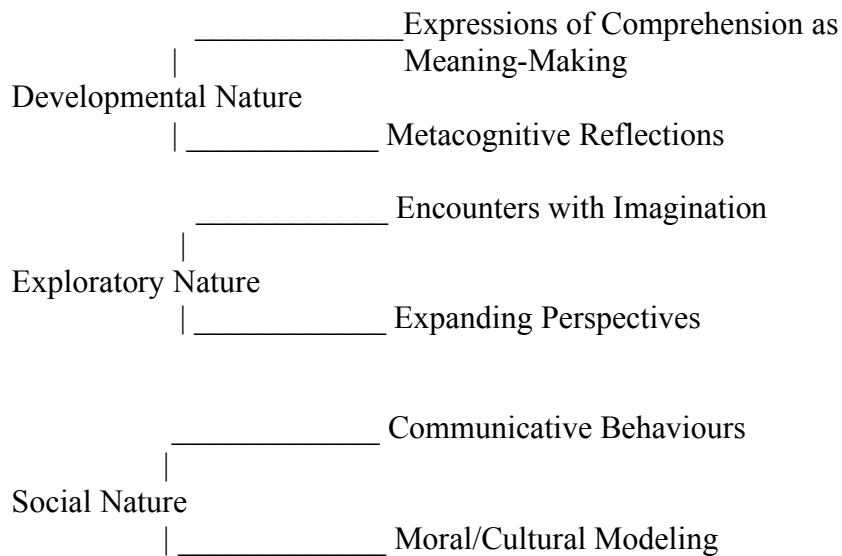
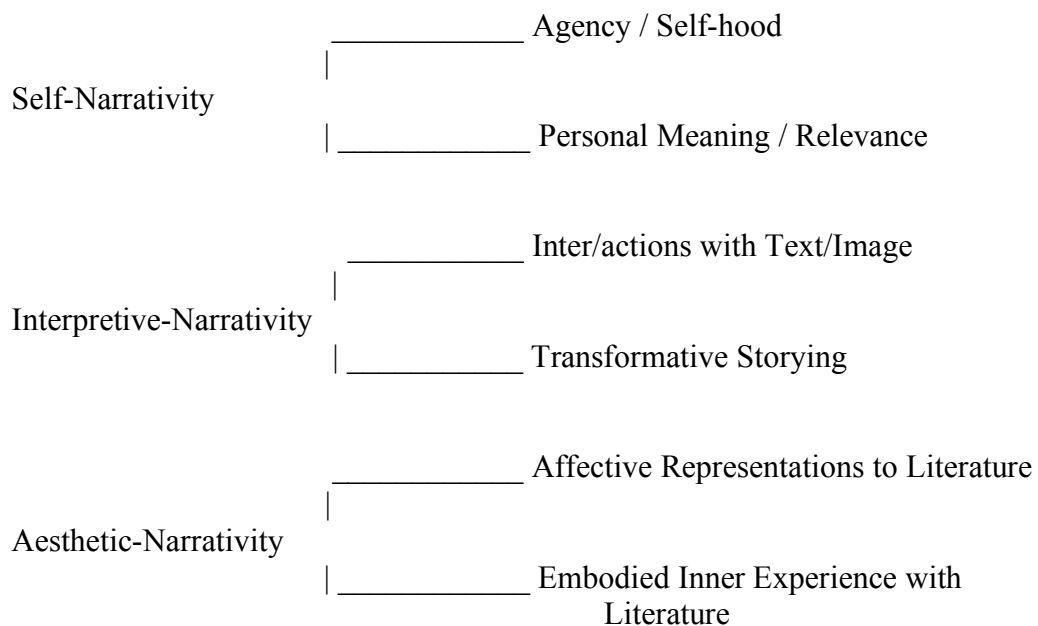
of coding would guide my future analysis in a way that elaborated and illustrated the nature of young children's sense of voice as demonstrated through their interactions with picturebooks. I recognized how order was imposed on the data and through this process I developed an understanding of an overall story about the research.

Through re-visitations with the core themes, my interpretations were prompted by a specific motivation to reorganize them into the story that was developing before me. Groupings and patterns in the data illuminated by selective scanning two core generalizations about the nature of young children's sense of voice: 1) core themes revealed characteristic qualities of young children's sense of voice, and 2) core themes revealed qualities of young children's experiential nature of a sense of voice.

At this point of selective coding analysis, my notes and analytic memos (Neuman, 2007) were reflections of the links I was beginning to forge between the layers of coding and theoretical abstraction. During this phase, I turned deeper into the analysis of the memos in order to see 'the story' of the research that could be represented visually.

The culmination and final result of the selective coding process involved, and led me to categorize and use the headings of situated and experiential constructs in the model illustrated in Table 7 (see next page). The detailed commentary related to the sketches, behaviour checklists, conversations and interviews, and art representations are presented in the following chapter.

Table 7.

*A Model of Young Children's Sense of Voice*Situated Nature of Young Children's Sense of VoiceExperiential Nature of Young Children's Sense of Voice

## Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion (Part I)

### The Nature of Young Children's Sense of Voice

In this study, two conceptual categories emerged that subsequently revealed six descriptive categories for the nature of young children's sense of voice. It was apparent that the two conceptual categories provided different, but complementary modes of describing young children's sense of voice. One conceptual category exhibited sites of the situated nature of students' sense of voice while the other exhibited facets of an experiential nature of young children's sense of voice. My interpretation of the conceptual categories led me to consider that young children's sense of voice was not described or experienced as one or the other, but instead is suggestive of layers of complementary inter-relationships.

The Situated Nature of young children's sense of voice was explained by perceived qualitative constructs related to the sites and the surroundings that precipitated students' multi-modal interactions and engagement with literature. When I turned to my reflective notes and the analysis of the sub codes and categories I was cognizant of the environmental conditions and qualitative situations where students' self-expressions of voice generated or evolved. This attention to the sites defined the categories that evolved. These three sites were; Developmental Nature, Exploratory Nature, and Social Nature as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8.

*Situated Nature of Young Children's Sense of Voice*


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Situated Nature of Young Children's Sense of Voice	
	<div style="text-align: center; padding: 5px 0;">Expressions of Comprehension as Meaning-Making</div>
Developmental Nature	<div style="text-align: center; padding: 5px 0;">Metacognitive Reflections</div>
Exploratory Nature	<div style="text-align: center; padding: 5px 0;">Encounters with Imagination</div> <div style="text-align: center; padding: 5px 0;">Expanding Perspectives</div>
Social Nature	<div style="text-align: center; padding: 5px 0;">Communicative Behaviours</div> <div style="text-align: center; padding: 5px 0;">Moral/Cultural Modeling</div>

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The Experiential Nature of young children's sense of voice included the students' expressive and interpretive interactions and representations with literature as integral to understanding how 'experiencing' is precipitous to the nature of sense of voice. In this study, expressive and interpretive interactions and representations with literature acknowledged that students made meaning of their world through different modes and multiple kinds of literacies (Booth and Rowsell, 2007). The multi-modal representations that depicted students' personal and interpretive views, ideas, wonderings, and conjectures, served to potentiate and illuminate an insightful narrative collage onto young children's experiential nature of 'voice'.

Students' multi-dimensional, narrative artifacts—as visual, aural, interactive, written and kinetic representations of meaning making were interpreted as emergent

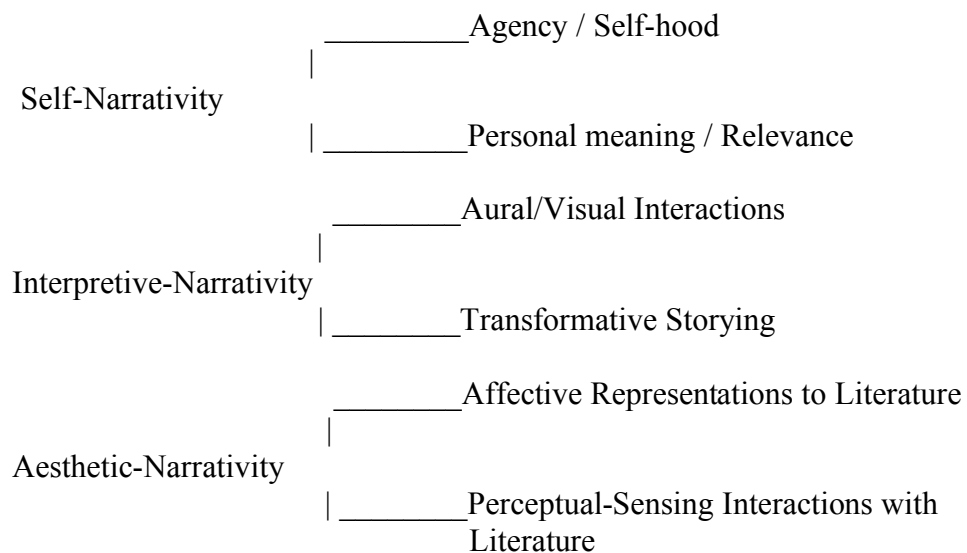
modes of authorial narrativity. Narrativity, as a dimension of students' unique narrative specificity (Landa, 2008), provided the framework to include and describe students' imaginative and creative storying as narrative depictions of students' sense of voice. The qualities of representation and self-communication of students' narrativity was indicated by the categories of responses that emerged through the data. Narrativity, as descriptions of experiential representations of multi-modal narrative experiences, was found to fall into three qualitative categories; Self-Narrativity, Interpretive-Narrativity, and Aesthetic-Narrativity.

Table 9.

*Experiential Nature of Young Children's Sense of Voice*

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Experiential Nature of Young Children's Sense of Voice



The discussion of the research findings is based on the figures of the conceptual categories; Situated Nature and Experiential Nature of young children's sense of voice. The six descriptive categories provide a framework for naming core attributes

grounded by the data analysis. The twelve subcategories represent the qualities of the lived experience and the interpretive content of young children's sense of voice.

*Situated Nature of Young Children's Sense of Voice*

*Developmental Nature*

This category revealed the sites and surroundings of the students' communicative behaviours as indicative of a qualitative premise of developing a sense of one's voice. Picturebook interactions and multi-modal activities appeared to play an influential role in students' recognition of self through their representations. As innate to each student's individuality, the data suggested that qualitative, developmental processes: Expressions of Comprehension as Meaning-Making and Metacognitive Reflections could characterize the nature of young children's formative sense of voice.

*Expressions of comprehension as meaning making.* During picturebook discussions, such as students' social talk opened an avenue for meaning making. Hearing self, for self, in relation to hearing others was a significant aspect of the students' interactions with the literature. The act of vocalizing 'self' served as a connection to hear-to-know one's own thoughts, experiences, and developing impressions and expressions. Joseph's response to the picturebook, *Edwardo the Horriblest Boy in The Whole Wide World*, demonstrates meaning making as his expression of comprehension: "He [Edwardo] feels bad and he gets into trouble. Edwardo would feel not good. It means like you do something you're not supposed to do. I would tell Edwardo, "Edwardo that's really not nice to hit people like that." It was like he was worse at the beginning to the middle and then better at the end" (Joseph, October 12, 2007).

One of the ways this was observed was in students' sketch responses to literature. During the course of the study, student sketches to literature occurred every week, as new picturebooks were introduced. As a constant, the sketches demonstrated developmental characteristics during the twelve-week study period. Generalized, students demonstrated growing depth in detail, which appeared also, to be reflected in their meaning-making as they 'narratized' their lived experience with the text.

For the response to *Wanda's Roses*, students were asked to sketch themselves into Wanda's experience in a way that demonstrated what they would do to make a difference in their world. To her sketch (below), Taya's written response (on the following page) was,



*Figure 1.* I am Saving Pets. (Taya, 2007).

“I am saving pets. They might die if I don't save them. The pets are cats and birds. There are oranges in the tree. There is falling leaves in there. I am climbing up the ladder to get the cat so he can live. When I get the cat I can go home. There is a ball in the tree too. The ladder is slippy so I might fall off the ladder” (Taya, November 29, 2007). Taya's written response is a close reflection of the details she

has included in her sketch. Her written response and sketch express her distinct sense of voice as she imagines herself as an advocate and helper of pets. By telling-through-writing she is developing her sense of voice through communicative skills of sketching, writing, and speaking.

*Metacognitive reflections.* This subcategory included the responses that uncovered the nature of students' engagement in personal encounters where expressions of thinking seemed to invite metacognitive insight during interactions and representations with picturebooks. The personalizing nature of bringing ideas, emotions, and thoughts out into the open through the picturebook experience and exploring self-awareness and understanding through representations seemed to create a novel space for students' self-discovery and reflection. The data revealed how students assimilated meaning from their responses into explorations with self-talk that encourage a new perspective or insight. The picturebook, *Matthew's Dream*, was a story with the themes 'setting goals' and 'dreams'. After engaging in discussions and art experiences, the students reflected on their experiences with imagination: "Imagination is in my body. I use it to do anything. If I didn't have imagination it would be like a bad dream" (Leo, November 3, 2007), and "Imagination is in your head and you can think about it. Imagination lets me play in my brain and I like it" (Nickie, November 3, 2007). Interpreted as a developmental characteristic of students' sense of voice, students' personal metacognitive events were powerful, as they appeared to instill these experiences into their being.

Some students experienced this inner thinking on thinking as an epiphany with the possibility of being taken forward to inform a lifetime. The picturebook,

*Courage of the Blue Boy* provided invitations to metacognitive openings, whereby an awareness of what was learned was often a beginning experience to metacognitive processes. For this story, students framed their responses as a personal insight into the role of courage in the Blue Boy's life, and how their life experiences with courage could be described. Through sketching, representing in art, and interviews, students remarked, "From the Blue Boy I learned how to be brave when I have to do something serious. I would be very afraid to do something impossible" (Jason, December 5, 2007) and "If I didn't have courage my life would be ruined. I wouldn't be able to do things. I would be too careful" (Nathan, December 5, 2007), and "Sometimes I'm kind of scared to read to my mom. I need courage so I don't get scared. If I didn't have courage I couldn't do things, especially when I'm scared of getting words wrong" (Kally, December 6, 2007).

For many, metacognitive openings through literature experiences appeared to be accompanied by/with students' emotional self-understanding and awareness of feelings. The data revealed how these components acted together to draw insight-out, from experiences, memories, or events, and into students' thinking on their thinking. In context, students learned to recognize these qualities and express them in their own distinctive voice.

#### *Exploratory Nature*

This descriptive category included all the responses that suggested students' propensity to develop their sense of voice, and self, through exploratory experiences with picturebooks. Data analysis of multi-modal responses was key to exemplifying an exploratory site intrinsic to young children's sense of voice. Students' emotional

capacity to dwell in the text and illustrations of picturebooks and enter the book as a springboard in/to their imaginations presented significant findings. Two subcategories dominated in distinguishing exploration as a site of young children's sense of voice: Encounters With Imagination and Expanding Perspectives.

*Encounters with imagination.* Multi-modal experiences, such as listening, interactions with art, and re-telling with picturebooks provided a unique entry into exploring sense of voice for each student. Students' imaginative interactions and representations transported them into an inter/active form of knowing and interpreting self through a creative lens. The students' imaginative responses allowed them to see themselves in a different realm of identity with pretend—where they related self as a plausible or imagined through the picturebook setting, or character, or events. As one student related during a sketch response, “My imagination wants me to go into the story. I like that feeling” (Ross, November 15, 2007), and “The picture makes my imagination think of more things. It woke up my imagination. I wanted to draw a picture about it” (Jason, November 15, 2007).

Students' played with curiosity as they inserted 'self' into imaginative art responses. Their openness to explore this provided a powerful means for experiencing possibilities and unknowns. The interpretive art responses to the picturebook *Lily Brown's Paintings* displayed how imaginative capacity influenced their creative encounter into a new voice. Experimenting voice through a creative expression allowed students to encounter emotional states and develop new evidence. The students' later translations of the finished art responses (during individual interviews) appeared as an opening for exploring personal characteristics of their

individualized sense of voice. In the following examples, some of the students painted themselves into their paintings as an imaginary participant or onto the paper as an imaginary voice.



*Figure 2.* My Starry World (Allison, 2007).

“In my imagination I am the princess. It’s me at my castle and there’s a dragon in the sky. I can feel it.”



*Figure 3.* The Lego Spaceship (Joseph, 2007).

“I like this picture because of the spaceship. It’s walking in space and there’s houses in the spaceship. My imagination wants me to go into that story. I like that feeling.”

*Expanding perspectives.* In this subcategory, students' multi-modal responses revealed how the literature experience initiated an exploration and experimentation that presented an opportunity to expand an existing perspective of self. Students' imaginative interactions with literature opened a window onto their lives in a way that changed their understanding in some way. The experience of incorporating new possibilities and thoughts about self resulted in students' openness to 'play' in a projected, exploratory sense of voice.

In response to the picturebook *Wanda's Roses*, students exhibited this in their written responses, and during the interview response to sketches. "When I saw the page where Wanda was talking to the lady and Wanda was helping the earth, that's when I thought I could do that too. Actually, the very beginning page is the one that gave me the idea" (Taylor, November 29, 2007). Taylor's response informs his imagination in a way that he was able to visualize himself, in a perspective of self that he had not considered. His sketch response (below) is accompanied with his written response (corrected for spelling): "I am helping animals and dogs and cats and birds and pigs and mice and elephants." Taylor developed a personal perspective of the picturebook experience that represented his exploration of self as an animal advocate.



Figure 4. I am Helping Animals (Taylor, 2007).

The story, *Edwardo The Horriblest Boy In The Whole Wide World*, has as its theme ‘the power of words’. In its presentation as a cautionary tale in a humorous tone, students interacted with text and illustrations in individualistic styles, dependent on the aspect of the story where they situated themselves. Students engaged in the aspect of ‘humour’, while others engaged in the aspect of ‘caution’. Multiple viewpoints were raised and shared by the students during the book talk discussions. Notably, initial personal perspectives were expanded. In a small group interview Nathan responded, “When the adults were talking to him [Edwardo] in a negative way they were always pointing at him. When people point to me, I feel not good. When people talk nice, I feel happy. I found out something I didn’t know in Edwardo. I learned from that story to be kind because I don’t like that feeling when someone points at me. I didn’t know that before” (Nathan, December 15, 2007). In common with other students, Nathan’s exploratory experience with story presented him with a personalized lived experience that expanded his current perspective of voice into his life.

*Social Nature*

This category accounted for the situated nature of students' responses to picturebooks that occurred within contexts of social interactions and experiences. Analysis of students' discussions and interviews revealed how their social interactions acted on, or informed meaning making. In addition, students' reflected moral/cultural mirroring, where students' sense of voice was like a mirror image or 'practice copy' of prior experiences assimilated through their individualized cultural and social experiences.

*Communicative behaviours.* Recognizing qualitative depictions of students' communicative behaviours as a site characteristic of sense of voice was an integral outcome to the study. It was interesting to see how students' multi-modal representations became child-centered records of experience pertaining to each student's unique identity and sense of voice. However, it was the final pass through the data that drew me to focus the interpretive lens on generalizing students' communicative behaviours as being characteristic of the surroundings as nature to sense of voice.

The scope of the story with/in the entire data pool portrayed consistencies in representations that appeared to display communicative behaviours of students' sense of voice. Each literature event required students to express their thinking and/or their interpretation of the experience through different modalities, while each modality engaged students in developing communicative skill sets. Students were engaged in language tasks through listening, speaking, interpreting, sketching and representing. Over the twelve-week study period students' growing capacity to engage and

recognize themselves through their multi modal representations was enhanced by their ability to communicate their individual sense of voice through language forms and communicative skills.

The social nature of students' hearing and listening, and turn taking with/in the fold of a community-of-care, provided the safe ground for hearing-to-know one's self in hearing-to-know for personal meaning. Evidence of validation, such as eye contact or attuned nodding, was apparent through the observations of students' subtle body language, whether giving or receiving was the outcome. As noticed on the video recordings, when these silent, bodied exchanges took place, students appeared to receive such gestures with positive validation and internalize them as affirmation of personal meaning making.

The following example is an excerpt of a transcription of a discussion about the picturebook, *A Bad Case of Stripes*.

Table 10.

*Excerpt of Transcription: A Bad Case of Stripes*

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Mrs. P: Boys and girls, have you ever thought that there was something so special about you but you didn't want to share because you were worried what your friends would be thinking? Pierce, have you had that feeling before? Can you tell us about it? Leni, has this ever happened to you?

B(1): It never happened but I'm sometimes scared that people will laugh at my lunch.

G: Other people laugh at your food?

Mrs. P: That's very interesting that you mention that Nicky. How many of you feel that—when you bring special food to school that somebody might laugh at it? And, its food you enjoy with your family..

B(2): But when I bring it to school it makes me feel different.

<inaudible chatter> <nodding>

B(1): Even if boys are not at the back table [in lunch room], they are not nice and they are mean when they laugh, they don't want it, to laugh at me.

G: When I was the first day of kindergarten last year I felt that. Everyone had blond hair and mine was brown. I felt left out.

G: Yeah, I thought everyone was looking at me. But I can be me too now, like Pierce said too.

---

During this exchange the students recognized their common, though different social experiences with 'difference' and 'uniqueness', which is a theme of the picturebook. The body language of acceptance and attunement by the students involved in this excerpt was also the signifier that the conversation was validated. It appeared that the conversation, as a social affirmation, was realized for its personal meaning of this lived experience through the discussion of the picturebook.

*Moral/cultural voice mirroring.* This subcategory explained how the nature of responses in social contexts demonstrated a 'mirror' reflection of the authoritative voices of others in the students' lives. In social discourses, responses

to questions illustrated students' latent and/or exposed working perceptions of ideas and values, of right and wrong, and/or good and bad. The picturebook experience became the 'stage' by which they identified with, and practiced an aspect of 'voice' that they had accepted and learned as their own.

Students demonstrated this notion of moral and cultural mirroring during every picturebook discussion. It was a common experience and one that demonstrated how 'telling' as moral mirroring was meaningful to their sense of voice. In responses to *Babushka's Doll*, which was the first of the nine picturebooks, students mirrored cautionary voices. "Be nice to people all the time so that you don't hurt their feelings, being mean is not nice" (Nathan, October 4, 2007), and "We should not be bossy and to let people like grandmas have a rest when they get tired" (Joseph, October 4, 2007), and "If you went to someone's house and use nice manners, then you could go back if you had nice manners" (Abdi, October 4, 2007). Through vocalizing their interpretations of the text's meaning to their lives, the students substantiated personal meaning by connecting it to oral and cultural values in their lives.

Students also listened in/to the comments of peers during their social talk experiences. Talk through the literature served their individualized need to hear 'selfhood' while listening to 'otherhood' with peers. Students acknowledged their seeing 'self' through 'other' as an affirmation—where it seemed a confirmation of likeness and acceptance and belonging between self and other. The appearance of commonality and attunement served as an indicator for students' assimilation of the experience into their own voice. This was noticed through body language such as

nodding, hand gestures, and the hearing-on characteristics of prolonged engagement during book discussions.

The following chapter describes the findings and provides the discussion on young children's experiential nature of interactions and representations of picturebook experiences. The data exposed three categories of narrativity that expressed their sense of voice: Self-Narrativity, Interpretive-Narrativity, and Aesthetic-Narrativity.

## Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion (Part 2)

### *Experiential Nature of Young Children's Sense of Voice*

#### *Self-Narrativity*

This category included the data that showed evidence that the students' expressions of, and interactions with personal narratives contributed to the experiential nature of developing their sense of voice. Students interacted with the picturebooks with a natural curiosity to draw relevance and connections to self by recognizing elements of their lives or experiences in and through the text. Student responses that exemplified their expressions of self-narrativity through picturebook experiences were recognized in the subcategories; Agency/Self-Hood and Personal Meaning/Relevance.

*Agency/self-hood.* The data revealed how students' interactions with picturebooks provided opportunities for exploring their sense of voice through their real or imagined perceptions of self or projections of agency. Discussions that followed read-alouds and interviews were important modes for students to express and hear themselves as self-narrators and meaning makers. For example, while working with the picturebook *Wanda's Roses*, all the students could visualize themselves as agents of change or as advocates in their lives in some way. Some student responses reflected moral and exploratory characteristics: "I have to save all the animals. I want to save them from bad diseases and cancer and leukemia and other kinds of diseases" (Gabrielle, November 29, 2007), and "I want to take care of turtles in my life. There will be no turtles left if we don't take care of them" (Ashley, November 29, 2007). In this example, the two girls expressed personal meaning and

comprehension of agency and self-hood through their personal experiences and background knowledge. Gabrielle's background knowledge about the function of hospitals is drawn from her understanding of her mother's job. She applied this knowledge to her self-narrative as she imagined her agency on behalf of animals. Likewise, Ashley's advocacy for turtles might have developed through her experience at a turtle sanctuary while on a family vacation. As typical of these examples, students made connections between their recognition of the theme of agency in the picturebook, and their understanding of the concept by applying it to their real or imagined life experiences.

Also, the experiential nature of self-narrativity drew students into explicating a self-hood that yielded a stronger and more powerful sense of voice. The students' emotional feelings of altruism were both heroic and imaginatively captivating for them: " 'You just have to take care of the earth and pick up garbage!' I said to myself." (Pierce, November 29, 2007), and "If I didn't have courage I couldn't do the things that I really wanted to do because I would be too scared" (Kelly, December 5, 2007).

As another modality of self-narrativity, the sketches allowed students to represent themselves in experiences of self-hood and agency. By inserting themselves bodily into the sketch they could visualize themselves in the narrative, as active agent and participant.



*Figure 5. Saving Cats is What I Do (Allison, 2007).*

Allison's sketch demonstrates a strong sense of self in her narrative. She has drawn an active picture of herself, with her hands at her mouth calling up to the cat at the top of the tree. She is engaged in helping the cat. The emotions and actions she shows in her sketch are visibly congruent to representation of self-in-agency. Her self-narrativity is further supported by her journal entry (corrected for spelling): "I like to save cats. Saving cats is what I do. I can climb and save them."



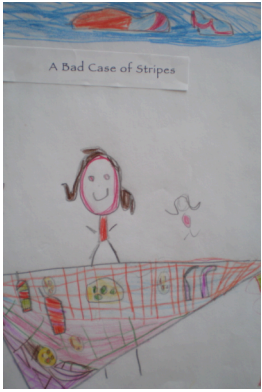
*Personal meaning/relevance.* This subcategory encompasses the prolific number of responses that revealed the various ways that students experienced personal meaning and relevance through self-narratives. The breadth of responses in this subcategory relates to how students interacted with the picturebooks and the manner in which they recognized relevance for themselves and expressed it because of its personal meaning. In practice, and in this study, the picturebooks were chosen because they presented plausible life events that young children could relate to or might encounter (such as school life, family relationships, interactions with nature




and the world) and issues of humanity (such as respect, individuality, identity, advocacy, dreams, imagination, creativity, and morality). The data substantiated that personal significance of meaning and relevance was individualized and distinct.




Taking into account the situated nature of developmental, exploratory, and social constructs of young children's sense of voice, the experiential category of self-narrativity prompted me to notice how individual students' responses were reflections of individual personal meanings and relevance. For this discussion I considered the compilations of responses for two students, one boy and one girl, as one way to describe the data that could have equally detailed all 16 students. This process of observing and interpreting the data for two students over time, allowed me to develop deeper insight and awareness into the experiential nature of self-narrativity. The two tables that follow present the individual responses and interactions from two students, for all nine picturebook experiences.

Table 11.

*Personal Meaning/Relevance: Kara*

<p><b><i>Babushka's Doll</i></b> (interview, response to sketch)</p>	<p>“Natasha has to push the doll over and over and faster and faster and she’s getting really tired. I showed it in their faces. The doll was happy and Natasha was sad. I like the way I drew Natasha the best because it’s the best part of the story I like the best.”</p> <p>“I like drawing about the story. When we’re drawing I remember the story more and it makes me think of it.”</p>	
<p><b><i>Edwardo The Horriblest Boy In The Whole Wide World</i></b> (sketch, interview)</p>	<p>“If what happened to Edwardo happened to me I would feel mad—it’s a feeling that stays with you until summer time. The adults have to know what it feels like. It helps to be nice to people all the time so that you don’t hurt their feelings.”</p>	
<p><b><i>A Bad Case of Stripes</i></b> (small group interview, sketch response)</p>	<p>“Camilla was worrying too much about they would laugh at her. She learned to be herself. My sketch shows Camilla eating lima beans and she has a smile on her face because she can just be herself now and be happy.”</p>	

<p><b>Matthew's Dream</b> (interview, art interaction, response/reflection to art)</p>	<p>&lt;Hesitating-looking at artwork&gt; "I feel like I'm on a stage. All the colours are the stage and I'm dancing the Nutcracker. The colours make me feel happy, especially the bright yellow."</p> <p>"I'm going to name this picture 'Colours' because it's what I feel the most."</p>	
<p><b>Lily Brown's Painting</b> (interview, art interaction, response/reflection to art)</p>	<p>"My favourite page in the book is the one with the fruit. I like it because there's all different kinds of fruit and I like all the faces on them."</p> <p>"It makes me feel excited because it makes a picture in my imagination. My imagination wanted to draw a picture about it. I'm like Lily Brown because I imagine being in the book with her."</p>	
<p><b>Wanda's Roses</b> (interview, journal writing, sketch response)</p>	<p>"My sketch is about me picking up garbage to help the earth so that plants can grow." [Journal writing (corrected for spelling): I am picking up garbage in my back yard. Me and my mom are picking up garbage with me. My leaves are spotted and striped and pointed and my sister is helping me.]</p> <p>"When I saw the picture about when Wanda is talking to a lady with a stroller and I like it because she was removing garbage so that sunlight could find the plant."</p>	

<p><b><i>Oliver Has Something to Say</i></b> (interview, journal writing, sketch response)</p>	<p>[Journal writing (corrected for spelling): I would tell Oliver “Why aren’t you talking to your mom and tell your mom that you want to play with your friends... to be brave. Why will you not talk?”</p>	
<p><b><i>Courage Of The Blue Boy</i></b> (interview, sketch response)</p>	<p>“Sometimes I’m kind of scared to read to my mom. I need courage so I don’t get scared. I’m kind of scared of getting them [words] wrong.”</p> <p>“If I didn’t have courage I couldn’t do things that I really wanted to because I would be too scared.”</p>	
<p><b><i>A Story For Bear</i></b> (interview, sketch response)</p>	<p>“I like listening to stories because things sometimes they make me happy. I feel kind of changed when you read a story. Something in my body changes. It’s a feeling that comes inside. I want it to come back all the time.”</p>	

The table displays recorded fragments of Kara’s experience over the course of twelve weeks. Her visual representations of meaning and recorded interview captions on the picturebook experiences provided an insightful picture into her qualities of self-narrativity and the experiential nature of her sense of voice. Kara related how



the act of sketching is an important aspect of representing her meaning making. “I like drawing about the story. When we’re drawing I remember the story more and it makes me think of it” (Kara, October 4, 2007). All of her narratives included an emotional component or a reference to her experience when her emotions were engaged, such as her experience when naming one of her paintings, “I’m going to name this picture ‘Colours’ because it’s what I feel the most” (October 31, 2007) or when she described her dream of dancing, “I feel like I’m on a stage. All the colours are the stage and I’m dancing the Nutcracker. The colours make me feel happy, especially the bright yellow” (November 2, 2007).





Kara was aware of the role her imagination plays, and the way it precipitates relevance and personal meaning in her self-narratives. For example, in her response to *Lily Brown*, she explains, “It makes me feel excited because it makes a picture in my imagination. My imagination wanted to draw a picture about it. I’m like *Lily Brown* because I imagine being in the book with her” (November 16, 2007). Kara demonstrated through her experiences with literature that she was able to access her imagination and express its relevance and the satisfaction she assigns to it. Kara’s sense of voice was clearly audible when she shared her advice to *Oliver* (November, 21, 2007) in her written response: “Why aren’t you talking to your mom and tell your mom that you want to play with your friends... to be brave. Why will you not talk?” Likewise, Kara’s self-narrativity shows a vulnerability that reveals her understanding and relevance of courage in learning to read: “Sometimes I’m kind of scared to read to my mom. I need courage so I don’t get scared. I’m kind of scared of getting them [words] wrong” (December 5, 2007). Lastly, Kara’s narrativity was




evident in her sketches and artwork. She demonstrated personal meaning through the details in her sketches and through her attention to expand on them during re-telling which included reference to her family members: “I am picking up garbage in my back yard. Me and my mom are picking up garbage with me. My leaves are spotted and striped and pointed and my sister is helping me.]” (November 29, 2007).

Table 12.

*Personal Meaning/Relevance: Taylor*

<p><b><i>Babushka’s Doll</i></b> (interview, response to sketch)</p>	<p>“Natasha has to be nice. She shouldn’t be bossy and she should let her grandma have a rest. Then she got frightened from the doll. I think I should be patient, and if you can’t be patient maybe someone can help you.”</p> <p>“My picture shows the actions. She [author] showed the actions. She used the colours to show her emotions.”</p>	
<p><b><i>Edwardo The Horriblest Boy In The Whole Wide World</i></b> (sketch, interview)</p>	<p>“Edwardo felt sad. He felt like people didn’t like him. They didn’t understand him. I liked the part when he was making the drum with the pots.”</p>	

<p><b><i>A Bad Case of Stripes</i></b> (small group interview, sketch response)</p>	<p>“The part when Camilla changed into the pill—it was funny too. That’s one of the parts where she wasn’t being herself and it changed her.”</p> <p>“I’m proud of my drawing of Camilla. I like the way I drew the polka dots.”</p>	
<p><b><i>Matthew’s Dream</i></b> (interview, art interaction, response/reflection to art)</p>	<p>“I’m feeding the panthers in the zoo. They are my friends. I like being a zookeeper because I feel happy. I can imagine it. I’m standing outside their cage and feeding them. The colours are exciting to me.”</p> <p>“I’m calling my painting, ‘My Zoo Picture’.</p>	
<p><b><i>Lily Brown’s Painting</i></b> (interview, art interaction, response/reflection to art)</p>	<p>“I like this page the best [alligator] because it’s funny. The animals are doing funny things. It’s like they’re in a park. They don’t belong there. My imagination wants to jump inside. I’d play with the animals.</p> <p>“I can’t think how Lily Brown is like me, or I am like Lily Brown?”</p>	
<p><b><i>Wanda’s Roses</i></b> (interview, journal writing, sketch response)</p>	<p>“I am helping dogs in my sketch. They will get lost without my help.”</p> <p>[Journal writing (corrected for spelling): I am helping animals and dogs and cats and birds and pigs and mice and elephants.]</p>	

<p><b><i>Oliver Has Something to Say</i></b> (interview, journal writing, sketch response)</p>	<p>[Journal writing] (corrected for spelling): If I were Oliver I would speak for myself. I would tell Oliver to tell his mom and dad to let him speak.</p>	
<p><b><i>Courage Of The Blue Boy</i></b> (interview, sketch response)</p>	<p>“I remember going down a hill with jumps on my skis and I fell. I needed courage to get down the hill but it was fun.”</p> <p>“I learned to be brave from the Blue Boy. I need courage so I won’t be scared of everything.”</p>	
<p><b><i>A Story For Bear</i></b> (interview, sketch response)</p>	<p>“I like to read books. It’s fun when you read to me because I like the stories. I’m really excited thinking about what story you’re going to read. I learn things about myself like not to be mean. When you read I’m thinking about the story.”</p>	

The table of Taylor’s responses also provides a visual representation of meaning and recorded interview captions on the picturebook experiences. Again,

examining the record of his data provided an insightful picture into his qualities of self-narrativity and the experiential nature of his sense of voice. Tyler noticed very early how authors show action in their illustrations. His attraction to this awareness was reflected in his drawing-telling captions: “My picture shows the actions. She [author] showed the actions. She used the colours to show her emotions” (Taylor, October 4, 2007). It was important to Taylor that he projected emotions and actions in all his sketches. Taylor demonstrated through his interviews that his favourite parts of the picturebooks were among the focal points when actions and emotions came together. He developed contexts for personal meaning out of these transactions between text and illustrations and represented their relevance through his sketches and artwork. In the story, *A Bad Case of Stripes*, Taylor’s interview captures this interplay: “The part when Camilla changed into the pill—it was funny too. That’s one of the parts where she wasn’t being herself and it changed her. I’m proud of my drawing of Camilla. I like the way I drew the polka dots” (October 18, 2007).

Taylor’s encounters with imagination revealed a repetitive theme that persisted over time with three of the picturebooks. In these interactions, Taylor focused his imagination, his advocacy, and his dreams onto his interest in animals. Taylor’s self-narrativity reflects his enduring passion for animals, as indicated through one of his responses: “I am helping dogs in my sketch. They will get lost without my help.” [Journal writing (corrected for spelling): I am helping animals and dogs and cats and birds and pigs and mice and elephants] (November 29, 2007). His propensity to sustain a focus on this theme was a source of personal meaning, while at the same time might it have reflected a ‘comfort zone’ for him. Taylor also demonstrated how

he developed a strong capacity to internalize a picturebook character's experience into meaning about his own life. During two interviews, Taylor referred to the notion of 'learning about himself' through a character: "I learned to be brave from the *Blue Boy*. I need courage so I won't be scared of everything" (December 5, 2007) and "I learn things about myself like not to be mean. When you read I'm thinking about the story" (December 15, 2007).

### *Interpretive-Narrativity*

This category included the data that suggested how students' interpretations of their experiences with picturebooks impacted their narrative representations of self and sense of voice. Students were provided the opportunity to interact and represent meaning through multiple modalities, which appeared to invite a range of individual, interpretive stances. In this study, the two dominant aspects of interpretive-narrativity that reflected a wide scope of the experiential nature of young children's sense of voice were: Aural/Visual Interactions and Transformative Storying.

*Aural/visual interactions.* During read-alouds, the students' first, distinctive impressions and interpretations of the picturebook occurred through their vivid, initial aural and visual interactions. The data gathered from the behaviour checklist and video recordings during read-alouds revealed how students' initial interactions were stamped by their emotional and sensory perceptions of text and image. The multi-modal responses that were initiated by these first interpretations were subsequently developed into personal, interpretive visual narratives of voice. Over the course of time with each picturebook, it seemed that students' cumulative

narratives represented an interpretive experiential record based on their aural and visual interactions.

As implied readers and active listeners during read-aloud events, students' aural interactions reflected their recognition of what makes a read-aloud interesting and what aspects of reading aloud capture their attention. Likewise, students' demonstrative understanding of their role as aural interpreters of text during read-alouds was evident throughout the study. Student's comments on my read-aloud style were indicative of their genuine understanding of receiving aurally: "The way you read it, it is a good story" (Nickie, December 14, 2007), and "When you change your voice it feels like it's real" (Gabrielle, December 14, 2007), and "I like when you read the story all at once" (Taya, October 4, 2007).

To illustrate the role of visual interactions, students' anecdotes of experiences from the picturebook, *Lily Brown's Painting* provided a rich and demonstrative record of interpretive-narrativity through aural and visual interactions. The picturebook invites students to explore their imagination through Lily's paintings. During the interview after the first reading, students' responses to their favourite pages revealed their re-telling of emotion-laden aural and visual interactions with the read-aloud event. In this example three different students chose the same favourite page: "My favourite page is the one with the fruit because it has my favourite colours on it. The faces look like people! My imagination makes me feel hungry now...when you turned the page the book made me feel happy" (Taya, November 15, 2007), and "They are my favourite fruits. The faces on them are sometimes happy and some are sleepy. I can see the sun shining on them. The page is fun. I felt like Lily Brown

when she used fun colours” (Jim, November 16, 2007), and “I like this page because all the fruit was making funny faces. My imagination says, “Ooh look at those funny faces!” I think about my mom passing me an apple” (Nickie, November 16, 2007).

From these initial personal interpretations of meaning, the book provided an invitation for students to sustain their engagement with various narrative processes. The richness of their responses played an important role in how they developed their interpretive narratives and their sense of voice over the week. In one activity, students were led through a visualization activity into their imagination. Using the visual and aural frame modeled from the picturebook read-aloud, students entered into their own interpretative world. The excerpt from the transcription that led students through this experience demonstrates an aspect of pedagogy and practice that provided the invitation to explore interpretive narrativity:

*Mrs. P: “Boys and girls, let’s go into Lily’s world. Everybody close your eyes. When your eyes are closed, think about where you want to go in the story and see all the things that Lily Brown saw. <silent> Now, you are going to jump into your own imagination. And, when you get there, you’re going to turn the ‘video’ on. It’ll be moving and you’re going to see it. Where is your imagination taking you and how do you want to draw it and paint it. Think about what you see there. Where do you want to go? What are the colours in your imagination? Is it moving again? What’s happening now in your imagination, where is it taking you? <Silent><continues> Boys and girls, open your eyes. <Inaudible> ...and now we’re going to start drawing your imagination.”*

(Transcription, November 16, 2007)

Students shared their imaginative storying event of the visualization activity with a partner, taking turns as storyteller. During the second reading of the picturebook, the students were at their desks with art paper on their desktop. While I read the story (without showing the illustrations this time), the students’ aural interactions with the text enhanced the prompt of drawing their imaginative

visualization. The students painted their imaginative and interpretive narratives in watercolours and shared-talked about their completed work during the second interview: “In my painting I’m walking on the sidewalk with the person upside down. My imagination, if I walk in there on my head, it makes me feel bumpy. If I was in it I would feel the houses moving. I like my imagination. It’s for making things up, whatever I want. Lily Brown is like me because I’m good at painting and she is too” (Leni, 2007).



*Figure 6.* The Bright Town (Leni, 2007).

Joseph said, “My imagination made me remember when I was doing a flip. My painting is about Star Wars because that’s what Lily Brown made me feel. I’m like Lily because she makes me feel like an artist.”



Figure 7. The Dragon's Castle (Joseph, 2007).

All read-aloud events invited students to develop interpretations of visual and aural interactions with literature. Through cumulative experiences with picturebooks over time, students represented their experiential narratives with greater awareness of self through their representations. The voice they applied to their multiple representations provided a range of multi-modal avenues of recognizing their sense of voice as authentically, their own.

*Transformative storytelling.* In their capacity as meaning makers and implied readers during read-aloud events, students' comprehension and personal interpretations consistently involved interactions with multiple possibilities with/in picturebooks. The essence of importance gleaned from the data was in noticing the characteristic ways that students expressed interpretive-narrativity: as an experience that acted in its potential, to transform or incite change onto their lifeworld of self. "In this sense, the leap into transformative change is a metacognitive empathic leap, where young children shift from 'self' into another, larger imaginative capacity. Change occurs when their interpretation leads to more inclusive meanings...from focus only on self to focus on others" (Leah Fowler, in conversation, April 13, 2007).

Interpretative-narrativity was noticed when students recognized their own life experience through the characters or storyline, and in some manner a different interpretation was facilitated for further contemplation and thought. Students' social interactions and open discussions appeared to invite imaginative and interpretive stances with the picturebook. Engaging students in representing their interpretive narratives through sketch responses, journal writing, and drawing-telling enhanced the potential for transformative interpretations.

Some students imagined and then interpreted real or hypothetical narratives through thinking about their thinking. The nature of metacognitive and transformative encounters for these students often included a quality of self-recognition in relation to 'other'. For example, the picturebook *Edwardo The Horriblest Boy in The Whole Wide World* presented students with an unexpected interaction. This picturebook seemed to play a role in what some students experienced, and specifically how they interpreted 'through' the text. As a precursor influence, the students noticed their reactions to the characters through Burningham's (2007) simplistic and emotive illustrative style.

Some students compiled interpretive narratives to this story that showed their awareness of the emotions and behaviours of the characters and their own life experiences. For example, Randy's sketch shows himself and his mother. Randy's drawing-telling to this sketch reveals much more: "Me and my mom are in the



Figure 8. STOP IT! (Randy, 2007).

picture. I'm banging the pots and pans and my mom is saying, "STOP IT." It's loud and she's thinking she's going crazy. I'm cranky like Edwardo when I bang the pots and pans. I drew our faces with lines like the author did."

Leo's interpretive-narrativity is vivid in his telling: "This picture is about me playing tetherball. He [Edwardo] was being bad and noisy. I wanted to beat someone in tetherball. Someone beat me. When Edwardo was being rude it reminded me of when I wanted to be good at tetherball and it made me be rude."



Figure 9. Me Playing Tetherball (Leo, 2007).

Both students interpreted a personal life experience with the text. Their responses were reflections of events that appeared to have personal meaning and memories attached. The nature of their responses could be indicative of how the picturebook informed a sense of awareness onto a particular life event and in some way the consciousness they brought to the reflection was personally significant.

Other students' interpretive narratives revealed their sense of self and voice that was 'un-like' their own self-perceptions, and instead reflected an interpretation of 'otherness'. The students appeared to view and interpret the character as at best, an imaginative interpretation: "In my sketch I was thinking about what it would be like to be Edwardo, even when I'm not like him. I'm making noise in the picture. My brothers were with me and we were making noise together in the back yard. It was fun and I tried to make the most noise, as loud as I could. Michael made the loudest noise."



Figure 10. I tried to make the most noise (Corinna, 2007).

Corinna's interpretive-narrative is of interest, as by nature she was a very quiet and shy student. Of all the possible interpretations that Corinna could have

sketched, she chose one that was highly uncharacteristic of her personality. She did, however, insert her two brothers into the narrative, even though they don't appear in her sketch. Perhaps her brothers' presence in her imaginative re-telling of 'other' was the only imagined interpretive perspective she could relate through this picturebook experience? However, it was apparent also that Corinna enjoyed the experience, as her interpretive-narrativity provided her with an imagined sense of her voice, one that was noisy and loud!

The experiential nature of transformative storying also played a role in students' interpretive-narrativity responses where a strong sense of transformation of self was realized through social action, advocacy, and opinions were prompted. Such was the case when the students were introduced to *Oliver Has Something To Say*. The illustrations in this story focus predominantly on the character's problem. Students' journal writing reflected their often-straightforward advice and problem solving solutions for Oliver.

For example, many students' writing (corrected for spelling) demonstrated advice for Oliver using 'I' messages: "If I were Oliver I would stand up and say something. I would be brave" (Gabrielle, November 20, 2007), and "I would say to him, "I can't talk for you." I would help him talk" (Ashley, November 20, 2007) and "I would tell my Mom that I want to go outside to play. I will tell Oliver to 'speak up' to his mom" (Joseph, November 20, 2007) and "I would talk by myself. I would tell Oliver, "I would help you talk by yourself.



Figure 11. I would talk by myself (Abdi, 2007).

These students' experience with text and the experiential nature of their interpretations seemed to allow them to imagine and experiment with a developing sense of empathy by ascribing their interpretations towards a character. By 'playing-through' their sense of voice on behalf of a character, a new interpretive sense of self was prompted. The students' capacity to explore their sense of voice through transformative storying interactions provided a ground from which they developed meanings other than literal interpretations.

#### *Aesthetic-Narrativity*

This category includes the data that describes the students' interactions with literature that evoked emotional affect and personal sensations through their representations of picturebook experiences. Sustained engagement and activity with the picturebooks often resulted in an encounter that stimulated imagination and perception (Greene, 2000) where students explored and discovered a form of feeling (Langer, 1953). Students' awareness to their sensations and connections to their emotions were expressed through their multi-modal narratives. During these moments when inner insight surfaced, the students' ability to recognize and articulate

their experience was significant to their narrative expressions. Students' experiential nature of aesthetic-narrativity to picturebook interactions appeared to represent students' affective (as emotional) and sensing (as perceptual) narratives in two general subcategories: Affective Representations to Literature and Perceptual-Sensing Interactions to Literature.

*Affective representations to literature.* As a site of reference, affective representations to literature described and recognized the specific characters of students' deeper, insightful narrative engagements. It is appropriate to say that all student representations to literature evoked an emotional charge that was significant to each student's experience. The characteristic of affective representations that appeared to herald an experiential entry into aesthetic narrativity occurred when students were visibly and emotionally moved by their experience. The nature in which some students communicated and gave voice to their experiences indicated that they were aware and conscious of the feeling-meaning of their lived experience.

For example, students responded to the picturebook *Matthew's Dream* by painting a picture of their own dream, modeled by Matthew's dream in the story. The students' representations were abstract in their finished format—lines that made spaces into shapes that were painted in primary or secondary colours. The students also made a paper cutout interpretation of themselves that they inserted into their dream. Because of the abstract characteristic of the paintings, students were asked during the interview to talk about their work and then asked to 'place' themselves (the paper cut out) into their dreams, which were glued onto the artwork. Students

often took their ‘self’ cutout and moved it several times, trying it here or there before laying it finally in their ‘dream’.

Some students’ responses to this picturebook demonstrated how they expressed emotional affect through their imaginations and use of colour: “The colours in my dream make me feel special. I help families so that they will get better. The purple in my picture is for caring” (Corinna, 2007).



Figure 12. Special Painting (Corinna)

“In my dream Mars is yellow and the sun is yellow too. The moon is orange and my space ship is under my feet. I feel happy to be in my dream because I want to go to different planets. I’m proud of the way I painted the sun. My painting is like Lego—I like playing the game” (Lance, 2007).



Figure 13. Mars Mission (Lance, 2007).

“In my dream I’ve drawn the best pictures in my life that I’ve ever drawn. My friends are in the colours and I’m playing” (Joseph, 2007).



Figure 14. My Best Picture (Joseph, 2007).

Justin's experience with this activity was very memorable. He sat down beside me at the table, with this painting in front of him and very lightly, in silence, moved his fingertips over his painting, lightly moving and touching the colours, moving over all parts of his work. His silence continued for long moments, and his eyes remained on the artwork. While his fingertips continued this slow dance, I asked if he could share his painting, "I'm inside my dream. I'm walking through my dream right now. I like these colours because I've used these colours. I feel like I want to do art all the time. I don't want it to end" (Justin, November 3, 2007). Justin did not raise his eyes off the paper. His response to his painting was emotional and meaningful to him. Giving voice to his dream appeared to be Jason's personal manifesto—to be an artist. As an aesthetic narrative, Jason was clearly moved by his experience. In observing Jason, the insight by which his conscious thought was revealed could be interpreted as a transcendent aesthetic experience for him. When I asked him to place himself (the paper cut out) in his dream, he knew exactly where it would be placed, and did so with exactitude and without hesitation. He then sat back in the chair and named his work, *My Painting*.



Figure 15. My Painting (Justin, 2007).

Students' aesthetic narrativity was also recognized during interviews when they were asked to reflect on their imaginative and creative representations of literature experiences. Using language to describe their experience, students reflected on their interpretations of the role that imagination played in their responses. Students' ability to articulate their understanding and experience revealed an emergence of metacognitive insight. The affective tone that students ascribed to their personal thinking and telling during the interviews was a portfolio of aesthetic beauty and truth. In response to their representations of Lily *Brown's Paintings*, the students' affective, aesthetic voices were revealed.

“I painted this because it made me think of my favourite page. My imagination wanted me to jump inside. It's something I can go into and be anything I want. I wouldn't get to do anything in your brain if I didn't have imagination” (Taylor, 2007).



Figure 16. Two Worlds (Taylor, 2007).

“I like my painting because it’s alive to me. I think of myself being in there. I like the feeling of being in there. My imagination is waking up. I feel really proud when I’m painting. Imagination is something that can happen in my life and in my painting.”

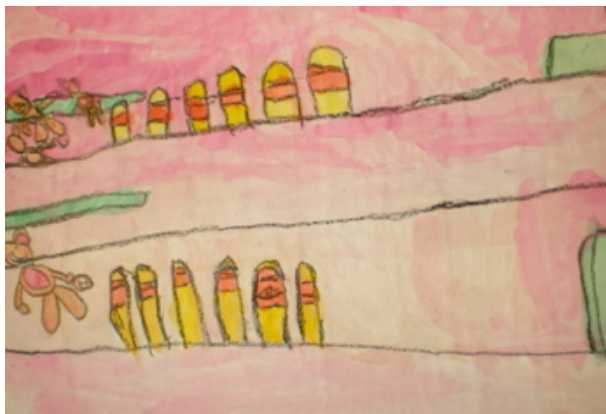


Figure 17. My Imagination Painting (Nicki, 2007).

“My painting wants me to be in an alien town. My imagination makes me feel like I’m going up into space. I love painting and my imagination takes me in space like her [Lily Brown]. Imagination is something that’s not real but I just pretend that it’s there. I wouldn’t have anything to do if I didn’t have my imagination” (Gabrielle, 2007).



Figure 18. Alien Town (Gabrielle, 2007).

These students' affective representations of aesthetic narrativity were visually graphic and demonstrative during the interviews. Inserting students' words and their representations here, is highly inadequate in describing and reporting the experience of observing, then absorbing their affective, emotional experience. The students' experiential nature of aesthetic narrativity provided an opening for expression and ownership of their developing sense of metacognitive awareness and voice.

*Embodied experience with literature.* Aesthetic narrativity was also indicated by data that demonstrated students' perceptions and sense of emotional attunement and aesthetic responses. Picturebook experiences were first, and primarily sensing and perceiving encounters. The affective nature of students' aesthetic narrativity was accompanied closely in nature by their perceptions of the text and images. They were natural and spontaneous assessors and interpreters of aesthetic beauty in their experiences with picturebooks. The students' responses to these experiences, as reflected by their sensing and perceiving capacities, were poetic elements of their expressions of voice and metacognitive thinking.

Students demonstrated how their reflections on picturebook responses and representations were aesthetic, perceptual-sensing interactions. In the following examples, these students made clear experiential connections between their bodily senses and their narratives. “My painting makes me feel like laughing. The picture made my imagination laugh. I would like to paint that! My imagination comes out of my brain and my heart and my eyes. I feel like an artist” (Abdi, 2007).



Figure 19. My Imagination Is Here (Abdi, 2007).

Justin remarked, “My painting makes me think that there could be dogs in the book. The picture makes my imagination think of more things. Imagination is something you think in your brain. It’s colourful and my mind makes it. If I didn’t have imagination I would be by myself only.”



Figure 20. Imagination Painting (Justin, 2007).

Students' responses to the last picturebook presented in the study were expressed through sketches and interviews. *A Story For Bear* is about a bear that discovers a human reading a book beside a cottage, in a clearing, on the edge of the woods. Bear is mesmerized by the sound of the woman reading out loud, and slowly journeys closer to hear her. He returns every day, and stays for the entire summer so he can hear her stories. One day, at the end of the summer, the lady goes away....

The fictional story provided an invitation for students to explore and reflect on their own relationship and perceptions of their lived experience with picturebook read-alouds. At the end of twelve weeks of daily interactions with, and representations of picturebook experiences, the students' unique sense of self and voice was exhibited in their aesthetic narratives with growing sophistication. During one on one interviews, the students responded to the questions, "What is it like for you when we read a picturebook together?" and "What part of a picturebook stays with you after the read-aloud?"

Joseph answers, "I like reading to people. When you read to me I learn new words. Some stories I like a lot and I like to sketch them. On some pages I feel like I'm in the book and I'm discovering the world. Sitting on the carpet is fun and looking at the pages and hearing the story is exciting" (Joseph, December 15, 2007).

Taya also reflected on how read-alouds impacted her understanding and perceptions on her own reading; "It feels like I'm reading a different grade. I feel when you read because I feel excited. It takes me into the story and it feels like I'm a character in the story. When you read the story I know the words. When your voice goes different in

the characters it feels like its real. I learn how to read better when you read to me” (Taya, December 17, 2007).

Some students related their aesthetic perceptions of read-alouds through identifying with ‘other’, either through the character or through their sensing interactions with the text: “It feels good and I imagine the characters when you read a story. It’s a feeling like being excited. It’s like seeing inside the book. I like listening because it’s fun looking at the pictures. Sometimes I do learn about myself from a story, like *Lily Brown*” (Allison, December 15, 2007). Gabrielle also described her sensing through listening in depth, “I like to listen to stories because it’s nice listening to what happens. When you change your voice to characters voices, I feel like I’m closer in the story. I always like the feeling of listening to new stories” (Gabrielle, December 14, 2007), while Abdi explains, “It feels like my imagination is open and I’m thinking in it. It’s like feeling good. I learn sometimes about me, like “I didn’t know that!” When you read the story and the pages are funny, you act like the pages” (Abdi, December 16, 2007).

The students who reflected on their interactions with picturebook read-alouds as an embodied experience appeared to be able to articulate an aesthetic perceptual-sensing; interpreted as something that happens internally. Leni reflects, “Stories make me have my imagination and it’s my favourite thing to do. My favourite thing about listening to a story is to see the pictures. It feels interesting inside. The story is the best experience you hear. It’s like a dream. I feel the story when you read is in my body” (December 16, 2007). Kara expresses her bodied sense of read-aloud in similar terms, “I like listening to stories because things sometimes they make me happy.

<Pause> I feel kind of changed when you read a story. <Speaking slowly>  
Something in my body changes. It's a feeling that comes inside. I want it to come  
back all the time" (Kara, December 17, 2007).

As the above examples demonstrate, the experiential nature of aesthetic narrativity appeared to evolve with students' ability to articulate a sense of their own consciousness during picturebook events and representational interactions. The possibility for experiencing an aesthetic transcendence was noticed for some students. The power of these experiences seemed to initiate an eloquent and poetic sense of voice through their articulations and interpretations of narratives.

#### *From Findings to Significance*

All the evidence in this study reports on the meaning of students' personalizing experiences with literature as unique depictions of self-hood expressed in the context of sense of voice. In practice, this finding resonates and supports a child-centered curriculum, while the wealth of understanding gleaned from the data also illuminates a larger educative lens onto the nature of responses and the nature of gendered responses. In this study, reader responses included all multi-modal representations, such as, aural literacy, speaking, drawing-telling, role-playing, sketching, viewing, interviews, and interpretive artwork. The implication for classroom practice encourages teachers to expand their understanding of the characteristics of young children's responses to literature. The study demonstrated how young learner's experiences and interactions are traceable records of responses to literature. In this study, the analysis of experiential data uncovered attributes and characteristics of young children's personalizing reader-responses.

Aspects of reader-responses that demonstrated tendencies that could be significant to gender appeared in areas of ‘what’ and ‘how’ boys and girls responded and reacted to picturebooks. While girls related to and responded to characters’ experiences through remarking on their own feelings or what the character might be experiencing, the boys were more likely to relate to and respond to what the character was doing; or what caught his attention and/or what was happening in the story. Also, where girls demonstrated interest in the parts of the story that were emotional or caring, boys were more likely to demonstrate interest in the humour and action in the story. Boys and girls alike demonstrated consistent engagement in their responses, often reflected as personally significant in other response representations. From this, teachers may expect young children to generate personalizing responses to literature that should be counted as significant to literary understanding and comprehension of text.

Gender differences were also recognized in reader-responses that are expressed (verbally and written) where young children were asked to respond critically or with a problem solving solution. Boys tended to relate to strong statements of advocacy, as ‘should’ and ‘have to’ and ‘sticking up for’, whether about the character or of their own reflections on personal experiences; whereas girls’ reader-responses reflected their tendency to ‘moralize’ good and right, while offering a detailed or elaborate communicative solution.

In this study, all gendered reader responses were considered as personal records of meaning, and in context of young children’s literary understanding, we remind ourselves to be cognizant of our own gendered perceptions and biases.

In summary, the data gathered and analyzed in this study uncovered and explicated an understanding of the nature of young children's sense of voice as indicated through interactions with, and representations of, their responses to picturebooks. It was found that young children's sense of voice was defined by two multi-faceted conceptual constructs: situated nature and experiential nature. The situated nature of young children's sense of voice was explained by three interactive, qualitative sites of engagement; developmental, exploratory, and social. The experiential nature of young children's sense of voice was explained by qualities of narrative specificity in responses to literature: self-narrativity, interpretive-narrativity, and aesthetic-narrativity.

The following chapter will discuss the implications for classroom practice and the pedagogical significance of the findings; read-aloud style, picturebook genre, multi-modal representation, reader-response, and literary conversation.

## Chapter 6: Implications for Practice

### *Celebrating Young Children's Voices*

This study was situated in classroom practice and grounded in pedagogical wakefulness (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Describing the nature of young children's sense of voice through their lived experiences and representations through literature was the impetus for the research study. Authenticating students' discoveries and their experiences were realized through data analysis of multi-modal forms of representations. In answering the research question and ascribing meaning to the story embedded in the descriptions of young children's sense of voice, several implications for consideration are discussed in this chapter.

First, implications for classroom practice take into account and recognize the primacy of picturebook literature in this study. As teachers of young children, we are encouraged to expand our understanding of picturebooks in practice, including incorporating literature as invitations for critical exploration and for expressing identity and voice. This is congruent with the study's findings that students' literacy learning and interpretations of 'self' were facilitated and extended through viewing (as implied readers) and representing. Second, the study offered insight into the nature and styles of reader-response and literary conversation. As teachers, we should continue to develop our understanding of how student's personal encounters and transactions between self and text must include our attention to an ongoing inquiry into identity. Third, the possibility for impacting early literacy language arts instruction from the context of teacher education is worthwhile. The study provided strong evidence and support for developing knowledge of 'multiliteracy' approaches

(print, visual, graphic, and aural elements) and critical literacy into early childhood pedagogy. Lastly, the limitations of the study and implications for further research in the area of early childhood education; literacy learning and language arts instruction are discussed.

In a final comment, the chapter closes with a discussion of the significance of the research to myself, the researcher. The journey and the process of experiencing the research and study warrant a revealing of the meaning of struggle and difficulty, of joy and contemplation, and of the relevance to my pedagogy and practice.

#### *Picturebooks and Classroom Practice*

The evidence in this study implies to the inextricable relationship between teachers' knowledge and understanding of picturebooks and young children's meaningful, experiential engagement. This is to suggest that teachers' familiarity with how picturebooks work as literary works and art forms that invite and engage teachers and students alike, (Hunt, 1999; Sipe, 2008; Nickolajeva, 2005; Nodelman, 1988) plays a significant role in enhancing the educative and aesthetic capacity of picturebooks in practice.

Teachers' read-aloud style has a significant effect on students' initial reception for and perception of picturebook texts. Evidence from this study suggested that young children were drawn into their experiences vicariously, as implied readers, through the teacher's interpretative telling. As teachers we are encouraged to attend to our own self-awareness of how we impact students' interactions during the read-aloud experience. In essence, the nature of teachers' telling and interpretations of the text influences students' potential and realized literature experience. In addition,

teachers who develop skills in perceiving and interpreting the meaning of students' body language and bodied reactions during the read-aloud can consciously respond to the students' affective and aesthetic experience of the text. This awareness, as an embodied communicative ability, is realized through teachers' integrated use of voice, body language, intonation, expression, and vulnerable emotionality, which wholly affects students' aesthetic and interpretive experience.

Features and genres of picturebooks play integral roles in determining how teachers optimize the potential of picturebooks. In practice, teachers may want to reflect on how features of picturebooks and genre combine in order to provide an invitation and exploration that inspire learning outcomes. The implications for practice revealed by this study refer to the nature of the 'hook' provided by picturebooks. Students' ability to engage aesthetically and critically with ideas of self and voice occurred through genres of fictional realism (and in a lesser extent to postmodern fiction); these were those picturebooks where young children relate to, and which made it easy for them to insert themselves into the plot.

A major implication for classroom practice involves how the classroom interpretive community negotiates the routines and procedures of the read-aloud as an event. In this study, students decided that the first reading of each picturebook should be enjoyed as a sensory and aesthetic experience, and should not be interrupted during the reading for the purposes of discussion. The second reading of the picturebook was much more interactive, and again, the decision that it would be so, was guided by the students. As teachers establish their communities of readers, they may want to reflect on their philosophical positions—who should decide on the

nature and manner of reading events? What are read-aloud routines? How are read-aloud procedures a negotiated enterprise in the classroom? In this study, the second reading of picturebooks was interactive and performative, including sketching while listening and/or role-playing. Teachers may want to explore their read-aloud practices with the goal of re-considering their role and the students' role in the negotiation of picturebook interactions.

#### *Reader Response and Gender*

Implications for classroom practice arose out of the data on gendered responses to picturebooks. The study was designed for gender equity (Booth and Rowsell 2007), which is explained in detail in Chapter 3. Tracking all responses based on gender provided a record of how boys and girls, through patterns and/or tendencies, constructed and experienced their multi-modal responses. Young children, at the beginning of their literary lives in classrooms demonstrated common characteristics of development in areas of aural literacy and listening, speaking, and drawing-telling events. The implications suggest that young children experience developmental and characteristics of response that don't exert a significant gender difference onto the data.

#### *Teacher Education and Early Childhood Language Arts Instruction*

Findings and observations in this study that surprised and enlightened are best applied to the context of teacher education and early childhood language arts instruction. Implications for teacher education relate to the findings that highlight the overwhelming support for arts based inquiry; as multi-modal expressions of meaning making that comprise an aesthetic literacy that extends young children's language

development. The results of this study exhibited an understanding that sustained interactions with picturebook literature produced exhilarating evidence of how young children develop skills and use their experiences to ‘get’ language to work for them; how thinking about their thinking provided a gateway into imagination, metacognition and critical thinking. As teachers and teacher educators, we need to continue to develop our understanding of language development as performative and interpretive representations of ‘selfhood’.

Teacher educators may be encouraged to explore the nature of literature in early childhood classroom settings. Inquiry that incorporates sustained interactions in the form of multi-modal responses to literature is a significant strategy in personalizing literacy learning. As this study reveals, students’ engagement and interactions with text through multi-modal representations (aural literacy, speaking, drawing-telling, role playing, sketching, viewing, art work), demonstrated personal meaning making and at the same time developed and achieved a sense of self and identity. Through the inquiry process the voice that young children heard was their own, in multi-modal layers of representation. As the data demonstrated, young children’s literary responses represent multiple ways of knowing and identifying self, as expressed through their voice(s)—as narrators, artists, storytellers, and writers. The compilation of experiences and meanings that young children develop serves to assert the significant parts into a personal schema of meaning, as voice.

Teacher education programs that inspire and encourage teachers to reach beyond the curriculum-as-planned towards an aesthetic curriculum-as-lived can envision a potential for language education that holds practitioners in a hopeful and

heartfelt pedagogy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Our youngest learners are about to be inducted into a global community where they will be required to function within the ‘Information Age’. As the evidence in this study suggests, young children develop a sense of selfhood and voice through their personalizing interactions and lived curriculum with literature. Young children become interpreters, critical thinkers, articulators, and aesthetic meaning makers of text, through literary works and language experiences that introduce and invite them into their inner lives and the outer world. Early education programs need to recognize the responsibility we assume in readying our students for their futures, and the significance of young children’s developing a sense of voice, of selfhood, and of self-agency as they embark and imprint themselves into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#### *Limitations of the Study and Implications for Further Research*

This study relied on gathering and interpreting data collections of young children’s representations of interactions with picturebook literature. I designed the data collection phase based on Sipe’s comprehensive model of young children’s literary understanding, particularly the Personalizing Aspect; life-to-text and text-to-life interactions. The ways in which young children personalize their responses was the lens I enhanced and extended in order to capture the nature of sense of voice. To this end, the picturebook genre chosen for this study was limited to fictional realism, and did not take into account other genres of literature. As a limitation, the study may have variations on the findings if different genres of literature were introduced.

In order to be a fully comprehensive study that describes a generalization of the nature of young children’s sense of voice, the study should be replicated in a

larger sample, and across the spectrum of early childhood aged students. Again, the picturebook genre chosen for this study was limited to fictional realism, and did not take into account other genres of literature. As limitations, each of these factors played a role in the research findings that when altered, may introduce other influences onto the findings.

In particular, many tools were used in order to describe data. I found that the Behaviour Checklist, which was designed to provide a record of students' bodied engagement and attention during read-aloud events was tedious to perform and did not meet its intended expectation as a qualitative tool. Also, in order to fully maximize the potential of video recordings of read-alouds, I would recommend that two cameras be used (instead of one), and a high quality microphone be suspended, or strategically placed. The purpose of the video-recordings was to provide a permanent visual and sound record of each read-aloud event. In three instances, transcripts were incomplete due to the nature of young children's quiet voices and the distance between child and the video camera.

The findings of this study invite several implications for further study. The study was conducted during the first three months of the school year, in a grade one classroom. An invitation for further research applies to extending the data collection period, from 12 weeks, to perhaps the full school year. In this way, data collected would fully represent a developmental spectrum of students' experiences, as measured by a school year.

The model that evolved out of the data, describes the situated nature and experiential nature of young children's sense of voice, as experienced through

representations of picturebook interactions in a language arts classroom. Further research that extends the study into other curriculum areas, or as an integrated study, using other genres of picturebooks will assess its generalizability. It is also relevant to consider whether the model may apply to, or describe the nature of sense of voice of older elementary aged students?

The interviews that followed the students' experiences throughout the study were integral to the findings. The students had the opportunity to talk about and reflect on their multi-modal representations. Further research that focuses on, and devises a model that describes the nature of the interactions between young children's creative experience (with the visual art) and their interpretive stance to the work may complement the findings that were suggestive of enhanced language skill development and metacognitive representation.

One of the sub questions of the study referred to the impact and influence that teachers' read-aloud style has on young children's listening experience. Further research that endeavors to focus on the transaction (as cognitive, aural, visual, embodied, aesthetic) that occurs between text (where teacher-as-reader prevails) and students (as implied reader) is necessary in order to fully understand the nature of interpretation and meanings available to the listener, in this case, young children. In this sense, the teacher's read-aloud style plays a significant role in terms of 'what' and 'how' the implied reader (student) receives, perceives, and interprets the text.

#### *Summative Remarks on the Study*

The purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of the nature of young children's sense of voice in the context of classroom practice. Through young

children's interactions with fictional picturebooks, they experienced and represented personal meaning through their interactions with, and interpretations of literature. Representations of learning and experience with literature were guided by classroom pedagogy and practice that exemplified multi-modal activities. The findings of the study suggest that young children's sense of voice encompasses awareness to the sites of engagement and the narrative representations generated through the experience with literature. The findings recognize the specificity of young children's multi-modal narratives of meaning as a source of exploring and understanding sense of self-hood and voice. The model offers a tentative characterization of my exploration and understanding of the nature of young children's representations of voice.

*Reflection: Personal Pedagogy and Meaning*

As a teacher-learner, and researcher, my ongoing reflections and ponderings throughout the research and writing process have affected me and impacted my pedagogy. The underpinning essence that guided this study was an attempt to include into meaning (as if a promise to life)—a curious wakefulness, a vulnerable and in/spirited pedagogy, and a reverence afforded as ‘home’—all into one question, an intentional research. By doing so, my quest for meaning and understanding the question was out there; no longer huddled in jot notes among shared pages in my private world of mind and journal! Out there: within the language arts classroom, with young children and their teacher, with picturebooks.

I had been wondering for some time. What really was happening here—with young children—and picturebooks? How did this inspired interrelationship become and transform? What is this location? Should it be named? How do I describe our lives, together, in this place?

I am becoming aware that there are conjoining parts of myself in this research. One is the teacher-researcher who conjectures, inquires, theorizes, investigates, plans, and interprets. The other, the same teacher-researcher, senses, dwells, passions, embodies, imagines, cherishes, and dreams. Herein lies the experience of feeling disheveled, where one personal difficulty resides. In my quest to merge aspects of meaning, into the role of teacher-researcher, a tension and chasm has been revealed. I must now tend/attend to it. On one hand, as researcher and writer I thrive sufficiently in words and language, and on the other hand I oftentimes cannot access or utilize language to assist. I have realized with profound awareness that, like my students, I

too, am discovering a sense of voice—a voice that dwells in the difficulty of expressing a researcher's life; of theorizing and embodiment, of interpreting and passion, of inquiring and cherishing, of learning and becoming. There were times when I could feel the loss of ability while writing this thesis, somewhere in the language/lack of language and the thing itself. There is a certain feeling of in/justice to the work that descends at times when my voice, in translation, is inadequate.

This difficulty with translation presents itself often when I attempt to use language to describe a sensing of knowing and perceiving my students' experiences; relating 'how' I know and perceive it. It is my common lived knowledge, of course, that the root of this 'other' source of sensing is situated within a mind and body that has adapted to severe hearing loss. In the context of the study, these 'other' sensing transactions of my students' experiences are not recordable as valid data. They don't appear in any level of coding or analysis of the data, and therefore, are not shared in their primal ground in the research findings. These transactions, between my students and myself aren't traceable or mark able in the tradition of research practice. However, they are re/mark/able—worthy of note and extra ordinary attention in my pedagogy and as such, are always with my research and me.

The transactions, which beg my attempt to translate, are felt as transcendence I realize now, as a source of pedagogic truth and beauty, of knowing myself immersed within it. Transcendent in awareness and consciousness, and understood by my body's interpretation of the thing itself, I have come to terms that, in this study, these interpretations reside as a whisper in all aspects of the research, inseparable from it.

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## Appendix A

Observational Checklist:  
Engagement Stances and Behavioral Responses during Read-Alouds

Key: + (More than 50% of students, by gender, demonstrate the descriptor)  
/ (Individual tally of students, by gender, demonstrate the descriptor)

Engagement	Male	Female	Observation/Notes
Postural Readiness at onset			
Attend to pre-reading discussion			
Eyes focus on picturebook (dominant)			
Eyes focus on reader (dominant)			
Eye gaze transfer (book to reader)			
Embodied attention (posture constant)			
Embodied attention (facial constant)			
Engagement shift (response to text)			
Engagement shift (response to reader)			

Behaviour	Male	Female	Observation/Notes
Facial response to text (emotional +)			
Facial response to text (emotional -)			
Spontaneous voiced response			
Embodied insight response			
Embodied response to text			
Embodied response to reader			
Distraction from read-aloud (eyes)			
Distraction from read-aloud (positional)			
Distraction during read-aloud (sidetalk)			

(Pletz, 2007)

## Appendix B

## Annotated Bibliography of Picturebooks

- Brisson, P. (1994). *Wanda's Roses*. Honesdale, PA: Caroline House.  
Wanda mistakes a thorn bush for a rosebush in the empty lot. She clears away the trash around it and cares for it every day, even though no roses bloom.  
Themes: care, stewardship, community, advocacy.  
ISBN 1-56397-136-4
- Burningham, J. (2006). *Edwardo the Horriblest Boy in The Whole Wide World*. New York, NY: Random House.  
Each time he does something a little bit bad, Edwardo is told that he is very bad and soon his behaviour is awful, but when he accidentally does good things and is complimented, he becomes much, much nicer.  
Themes: power of words, respect.  
ISBN 978-0-375-84053-1
- Edwards, P. (2007). *Oliver Has Something to Say*. Montreal, Que.: Lobster Press.  
Each time Oliver opens his mouth to speak, his chatty parents and bossy sister answer for him. Even on his birthday he can't get a word in.  
Themes: confidence, self-advocacy, relationships  
ISBN 978-1-897073-52-0
- Haseley, D. (2002). *A Story For Bear*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Books.  
A young bear who is fascinated by the mysterious marks he sees on paper finds a friend when a kind woman reads to him.  
Themes: reading, listening to stories, friendship  
ISBN 978-0-15-200239-8
- Johnson, A. (2007). *Lily Brown's Paintings*. New York, NY: Orchard Books.  
When Lily Brown paints, she imagines all sorts of fantastic things in the scenes she sees every day.  
Themes: imagination, aesthetic of art, painting, representing  
ISBN 978-0-439-78225-8
- Lionni, L. (1991). *Matthew's Dream*. New York NY: Alfred A. Knopf.  
Matthew lives in a dreary corner of a dusty attic. But a visit to a museum helps him look at his surroundings in a new way. Leo Lionni shows that art can change the way we see the world.  
Themes: dreams, representing, art, perspective.

- Neubecker, R. (2006). *Courage of the Blue Boy*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.  
Blue and his best friend, Polly, leave their blue land behind on a quest to live a life more colourful. They travel to lands that are purple, lands that are orange, and lands that are pink. They find a city unlike all the rest. A city where every colour exists—every colour but one! The Blue Boy summons his inner strength and courage to share his true colours with the world.  
Themes: belonging, identity, courage, risk-taking, expression of self  
ISBN 978-1-58426-182-3
- Polacco, P. (1990). *Babushka's Doll*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Book.  
A little girl gets a doll that turns out to be twice as rambunctious as her owner. Babushka's doll is magic and teaches Natasha a timeless lesson!  
Themes: respect, responsibility, care, manners  
ISBN 0-671-68343-8
- Shannon, D. (1998). *A Bad Case Of Stripes*. New York, NY: Blue Sky Press.  
Camilla Cream worries too much about what others think of her and tries desperately to please everyone. An old woman helps Camilla discover her true colours.  
Themes: individuality, identity, relationships  
ISBN 0-439-07955-1

## Appendix C

## Research Questions: Small Group Interviews

Picturebook	Small Group Interview Questions
Babushka's Doll (11)	<p>“Tell how your feelings are the same as and different than Natasha's when you want someone's attention. ”</p> <p>“How did Babushka's doll teach Natasha about herself?”</p> <p>“Why do you think Patricia Polacco wants us to remember Natasha and the doll?”</p>
Edwardo the Horriblest Boy in the Whole Wide World (10)	<p>“What did you notice about Edwardo when people were pointing at him in the story?”</p> <p>“How can the story help us when we think of how our words can be helpful or hurtful?”</p> <p>“What would you like to tell Edwardo's family about the 'real' Edwardo they didn't see?”</p>
A Bad Case of Stripes (8)	<p>“Why did all those things happen to Camilla?”</p> <p>“What does it mean when people say “be yourself?”</p> <p>“What can we learn from the story when we have feelings like Camilla?”</p>
Oliver Has Something To Say (16) (as written response)	<p>“What would you do if you were Oliver and other people always answered for you?”</p> <p>“What would you say to Oliver to help him speak for himself?”</p>
Wanda's Roses (16) (as written response)	<p>“Was there a part of the book during the read-aloud when you thought to yourself, “Hey, I could do that!”</p> <p>“When you did your sketch about how you could help the world, what was going through your mind when you finished the sketch?”</p>
Courage of the Blue Boy (10)	<p>“What did you learn about courage from the Blue Boy?”</p> <p>“What did your story tell about you?”</p> <p>“How does courage help you in your life?”</p>

## Appendix D

Figure 8. Axial Coding: Emerging Themes

<b><u>Emerging Core Themes: Axial Coding</u></b>
Self narrative as generative narratives
<b>Multi-modal narrative expressions of self,</b>
Imaginative engagement
Embodied presence with/in literature experience,
<b>Agency and understanding of self,</b>
Recognizing imagination as agent of voice
Agency and understanding of self,
<b>Recognizing imagination as agent of voice</b>
<b>Discovering voice in unexplored emotions,</b>
Sense of self agency,
<b>Representation of new understanding of life/with text.</b>
Sketches evoke memories
<b>Art as opening to imagined reality,</b>
Voice in art,
<b>Voice in visual narrative</b>
Illustrations as entry into book,
Imaginative voice in artwork.
<b>Agency as cultural or moral message</b>
<b>Imagined and informed altruistic agency,</b>
Acts of kindness,
Emotional attunement to illustrations as stimulus to individual response.
Agency on behalf of others,
Self-agency for own life and for others,
<b>Social scaffolding</b>
Emotional blurring of roles
Narrate self through character's experience
Students identify 'self' and experiences in characters
<b>Engagement in character-as-self interpretations</b>
Skill expressing self
Skills related to understanding questions
Cumulative nature of understanding self
<b>Communication as skill set in 'voice'</b>
Life experience to text connections
<b>Beginning narrative storying</b>
Memory experience and sketch details connected
<b>Social meaning-making</b>

## Appendix E

## Letter of Consent

**PARTICIPANT (CHILD) CONSENT FORM****Literature-As-Lived: Pedagogy and Practice**

Dear Room 11 Parents;

Your child is being invited to participate in a study entitled *Literature-As-Lived: Pedagogy and Practice* that is being conducted by Janet Pletz. I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge and you may contact me at school, in person, by phone or student agenda, if you have further questions.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in a Master of Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Leah Fowler. You may contact my supervisor at (403)329-2457.

The purpose of this research project is to explore my interest in how young children experience and represent an interpretive relationship with picture book literature. Research of this type is important because language learning, as an active, ongoing, construction of communicative processes of reading and writing, listening and speaking, and viewing and representing, inspires and encourages learners to become active agents in their evolving sense of self and world. Interpreting and understanding these communicative processes through engagement with picture book literature is an integral aspect of development of early childhood learners in their 'becoming' literate, and engaged lifelong learners.

Your child is being asked to participate in this study as a member of our grade one learning community of which I am the teacher and researcher. If you agree to permit your child to participate in this research, his/her participation will involve engagement in regular classroom activities such as sketching, writing, speaking, reading, listening, discussing and reviewing learning experiences. Your child's work samples may become part of the discussion of results in my research. It is possible that your child may be asked to participate in a class discussion that is recorded digitally, or in an informal interview individually, or with a small group of peers. There are no known or anticipated risks to your child by participating in this research.

Your child's participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you may withdraw your permission at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If your child does withdraw from the study, his/her data

will not be included in the research. In terms of protecting your child's anonymity, student samples will not be identified by name, ethnicity, or gender during the collecting or reporting for discussion in the thesis. Your child's confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected in the same manner. Data will only be discussed between myself as researcher, and the supervisor. Student work samples, as the data, will be returned to the child/parent.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others during the presentation of the thesis at the University of Lethbridge. Parents may also request to read the finished thesis upon its completion.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have by contacting the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge (403-329-2425).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to having your child participate in this classroom study.

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*Name of Parent or  
Guardian*

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*Signature*

---

*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

