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Case study explorations of emergent literacy learners' transactions with picture story books

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**CASE STUDY EXPLORATIONS OF EMERGENT
LITERACY LEARNERS' TRANSACTIONS
WITH PICTURE STORY BOOKS**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the
degree**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG



by

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

This study comprises two case studies which describe and analyse the experiences of emergent literacy learners with favourite picture story books and social literacy events, over an extended period of time. It is a collaborative study carried out in the homes and communities of the children with the parents acting as co-researchers. The study employs a naturalistic mode of enquiry and is informed by a socio-semiotic theory of language learning.

The main purpose of this study is:

- (i) to investigate the strategies used by emergent literacy learners to negotiate meaning during repeated experiences with favourite picture story books;
- (ii) to identify emergent literacy learners' uses of intertextuality;
- (iii) to develop a grounded theory concerning the relationship between picture story book reading and the development of strategies related to the process of reading.

Analysis of the data indicates that picture story book reading is a socio-semiotic process embedded within the wider context of home and community literacy events which provide and, in turn, take support from the experience. Each rereading is a literacy event containing a number of signifying structures and demonstrations which, in combination, provide the potential for interpretation and signification by the learner. In each event only some aspects of these signifying structures and demonstrations are acted on, depending on the learner's prior knowledge and his personal agenda at that time.

From the outset, the emergent literacy learner is shown to play an active, significant role in the experience. Acting on self-selected features of demonstrations by and shared engagement with experienced readers, the learner involves himself in a constant transaction between the author, illustrator, experienced readers and his current social, cognitive and linguistic facility to bring his personal meaning to the event. The strategy of intertextuality is consistently used to link past and current life and literacy events. From this process, the learner generates a number of strategies for meaning making which are congruent with a transactional approach to reading. These include strategies for initiating engagement, strategies for deepening and sustaining engagement and strategies for gaining ownership of the content and process of picture story book reading.

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