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"That's how you know." Exploring Young Children's Roles in Meaning Construction

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Abstract

Within the classroom, literacy learning plays a central role in what children are asked to adopt to be full functioning members of the culture. Children are asked to negotiate the signs of texts, as well as those of the classroom and larger society. The process of learning to read and write, needless to say, is a complex one. Research in reading has shown that to teach children how to participate in this culture successfully, teachers must build upon what children do well in a meaningful context (Calkins, 1980; Wray, 1997) as opposed to the teaching of skills and items in isolation (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1967; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). An examination of the roles of intersubjectivity and intertextuality by studies such as this one, provides an opportunity to better define the process young children undertake as they learn to construct meanings for novel texts.

Rationale and Theoretical Framework

Viewed independently, literacy learning can be said to be a complex process that entails an "extremely wide spectrum of knowledge, abilities, skills, values, social uses, and functions" (Richardson, 1998, p.123). This complexity is foregrounded within the context of a classroom as it is here that literacy learning plays the central role in what children are expected to adopt to be full functioning members of the culture. It is here that children are first asked to begin to negotiate the signs of texts, as well as those of the classroom and larger society. Many children and teachers quickly realize, however, that there is not an equal or uniform progression toward the development of this knowledge for all children. Nevertheless, the works of Heath (1982, 1983), Wells (1986), and Cazden (1979) have demonstrated that the inequality and disparity in literacy development among children must and can be taken into account when attempting to describe any aspect of this complex learning process. Recent work in the development of intersubjectivity among children (Boyes, 1993; Goncu, 1993; Lermer, 2000; Morrison, 1995; Nunes, 1995; Peukert, 1999; Van der Veer, 1996) suggests that its inclusion in studies of the literacy learning process may provide an avenue for describing this process in terms of the child as an individual; allowing one to take into account the variations that occur in the literacy learning process.

Intersubjectivity provides one with the ability to understand, interpret, realize, and predict the actions and behaviors of another with whom they share experiences and interactions (Soltis, 1985; Trevarthen, 2001). It is the understanding of another's subjectivity as being something similar to one's own that enables people to make intuitive judgments about other people's thinking in an effort to better understand them (Ritblatt, 2000). As such, intersubjectivity plays a determining role in how children construct knowledge of their world. While children engage in the construction of new knowledge of their world using signs, they are the determiners of what things are important and not important, of what to notice and what to ignore (Cunningham, 1987; Threadgold, 1986). Essentially, they are laying the foundation for the possible intertextual links they will make or will need to make in their future interactions with texts.

Additionally, recent studies investigating the development and use of intertextuality (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Elster, 1995; Lenski, 1998; Smagorinsky & O'Donell-Allen, 1998) have found that children's understandings of texts are shaped by the prior experiences they have had with the topic and/or similar previous texts. These previous experiences provide the lens through which children are able to construct and organize the information they are receiving from the current text, forming an intertextual link. These intertextual links help readers construct meanings as they "transpose texts into other texts, absorb one text into another, and build a mosaic of intersecting texts" (Hartman, 1995, p. 526). From this perspective, meanings are constantly being revised and reconstructed in the minds of readers to create an evolving web of significance, inherently a dialogic process (Lenski, 1998).

The work of previous researchers has demonstrated that young children make intertextual connections (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Elster, 1995; Lenski, 1998; Smagorinsky & O'Donell-Allen, 1998), but it has not explored aspects of the children's developing understandings for their roles in the process of meaning construction around the sharing of texts. This study seeks to further expand this area of young children's literacy development by investigating their utterances and behaviors as they engage in the sharing of texts within a kindergarten classroom. Additionally, through examining the roles of intersubjectivity and intertextuality in literacy learning of young children in studies such as the one described here, an opportunity is afforded that permits a more comprehensive explanation of this process.

Methods and Data Sources

This study was conducted in a kindergarten classroom over the course of five weeks. During this time the researcher and the classroom teacher engaged in sharing texts with children using a modified dialogic based reading instructional approach. The purpose of this approach was to increase the potential for intertextual connections to be made as well as to introduce the children to ways of connecting with texts that were different from what has traditionally been found to occur in classrooms (i.e., connecting with pictures and background (Elster, 1995)). Recent studies investigating the development and use of intertextuality (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Elster, 1995; Lenski, 1998; Smagorinsky & O'Donell-Allen, 1998) have found that children's understandings of texts are shaped by the prior experiences they have had with a topic and/or similar previous texts. These previous experiences provide the lens through which children are able to construct and organize the information they are receiving from the current text forming an intertextual link. These intertextual links help the readers construct meanings as they "transpose texts into other texts, absorb one text into another, and build a mosaic of intersecting texts" (Hartman, 1995, p.526). They construct interpretive frameworks (Rowe, 1987) as they sort out the meanings of texts through the intertextual links they create, a process of deconstructing and reconstructing texts, constructing meanings within cultural frames and Discourse practices (Gee, 1989).

Participants

Conducted over a five-week period, the study included a total of 17 primarily European-American participants (i.e., 15 European-American, 2 Latino, and 3 Afro-American children). It was during the initial week that baseline data were collected from video- and audio- recordings of the classroom teacher's interactions with the children and the collection of an emergent reading sample from each child by the researcher. In the second, third, and fourth weeks of the study, the children received a modified dialogic based reading instructional approach with the researcher. In the final week of the study, the classroom teacher resumed her role as the instructional leader during shared read-alouds. It was at this time that posttest information was gathered by the researcher with the collection of an emergent reading sample from each child.

Instructional Procedures

The researcher in this study incorporated instruction that promoted student verbalization of intertextual connections made as they engaged in modified dialogic readings of synoptic texts sets (i.e., these are sets of texts that contain a single story , idea, or event that can be read across variants). For example, variants of the traditional tale *The Three Little* Pigs were provided for use in the classroom (e.g., *The Three Little Pigs* (Galdone, 1970), *The Three Pigs* (Marshall, 1988), *The Three Little Cajun Pigs* (*Amoss*, 2000), and *The Three Pigs* (Wiesner, 2001)).

Modified Dialogic Reading Approach. The modified dialogic based reading instructional approach is based on the dialogic reading technique that has been used by researchers to study the development of oral language skills through the use of shared storybooks (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Whitehurst, Epstein, Angell, Payne, Crone, & Fischel, 1994; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, 2001). During the use of this approach the roles of the participants shift with the child assuming the role of the storyteller and the adult, as active listener, asks questions, adding information, and prompting for more information to be shared by the child (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001).

To accomplish this, the researcher introduced the instructional approach in the second week of the study. Children were introduced to the sharing of books through the researcher's use of: (a) asking 'wh' questions (i.e., what, where, when, why, who, which, and how questions); (b) following correct answers with another question; (c) repeating what the child says; (d) helping the child as needed: (e) praising and encouraging; and (f) shadowing the child's interest (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000). Modifications to this process were made so that connections to texts could be made more explicitly.

Throughout the initial stage of the use of this approach, the researcher introduced the idea of connecting texts with background experiences, previous knowledge, and other information contained within the picture by using statements such as "That is like the time I…"., "I wonder if there is anything I know that is like that…", and "I wonder why that is in the picture?" (indicating/pointing to something that was contained within the picture but was not specifically mentioned within the text). Explicit statements regarding how making these types of connections help one to understand the story better followed the use of these statements. Supplemental questions that encouraged the children's explicit participation in the telling of the story were also used during this time so that the children would begin to take on more of an active role in the construction of the story. The intent of these types of questions and the support provided by the researcher were to extend to the children an intentional, on-going invitation to actively respond and interact with the oral reading of a story (DeFord, 2001).

During the third week of the study, the modified dialogic reading approach was expanded. Children were encouraged to develop connections to texts beyond those made earlier in the study, more open-ended questions were incorporated into instruction, and children were called on to expand upon the statements they made. Specifically, the researcher demonstrated how to make connections between classroom discussions and other texts that relate to the text currently under study through the use of verbal prompts such as, "That makes me think of …", "That's just like what (child/teacher's name) said yesterday (last week or earlier might be substituted here as well) when we were reading (title of book) because…", and "I wonder if there is anything else that we've been reading or talking about that is similar to this…." Additionally, during this time explicit discussion of the four types of connections (see table 1) developed from Elster's (1995) categories of importations occurred in both small and large group story sharing sessions. The use of flannel board and puppets were also employed to facilitate the telling of the story in both large and small group reading sessions.

Data Analysis

All classroom sessions were both audio- and video- recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. Conversational analysis (Silverman, 2001) was used with the transcriptions to determine: (a) units of conversation, (b) the ordinary structure of classroom interactions surrounding books, and (c) who was given agency in both groups during interactions with texts.

Table 1: A Delineation of Elster's (1995) Types of Importations (Connections)

Type of Importation	Description
Picture	A child's use of information found within the picture, but that is not explicitly stated within the story is an indication that the child is using nontextual information found within the story to create a link with the text.
Knowledge and Experience	A child's use of his or her knowledge and experiences represents a personal linking between the story and the individual. This type of response is one that extends beyond the use of information found only within the text (e.g., pictures) and allows the child to incorporate his or her knowledge of the world, human motivations, and personal experiences with information found within the text.
Classroom Read-Aloud Discussions	A child's use of his or her memory of a prior read aloud discussion in conjunction with information found within the pictures of the text and his or her background knowledge enable him or her to form importations that incorporate many sources of information (i.e., those found within and outside of the text). These types of importations appear to provide the child with the means of commenting on the text using language appropriated from the teacher and his or her peers.
Text	A child's use of sources of information that are purely external to, but connect with the context of the text being read, further expand the importations/connections made. The sources of information here connect other book and nonbook texts with the information found within the book to help establish a more unified rendering of the text.

Additionally, data analysis began prior to data collection being complete (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Following the role of model qualitative data researchers, reading and memoing the data began as soon as it was collected (Creswell, 1998).

Data was grouped into "meaning units" in order to create textual, structural, and overall descriptions of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 1998). Field observations, including the taking of field notes during and following the sharing of texts focused on aspects of who was encouraged to participate and how they were enabled to do so, as well as, the structure surrounding classroom interactions with texts. Observations provide, "some knowledge of the context or to provide specific incidents, behaviors, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews. This is a particularly helpful strategy for understanding ill-defined phenomena" (Merriam, 1998, p.6).

As suggested earlier, literacy learning and teaching are complex and amorphous entities and demand the need for such extensive observation within a natural habitat. Conversational turns (i.e., a unit of interaction between the teacher, researcher, and children that has clear beginning and ending points) were determined from each of the transcriptions. These were analyzed using a rubric developed from Elster's (1995) categories of importations (see table 2). This rubric was also used to determine the importations made in children's emergent readings of familiar texts. These emergent readings were additionally evaluated using Sulzby's (1985) categories (see Sulzby 1985 for further discussion of her classification scheme for emergent readings of storybooks).

Results and Discussion

This study explored the roles that young children assume in the construction of meaning around the sharing of texts. Initial analyses indicate that the interactional patterns established in the classroom around the sharing of texts play a determining role in how young children participate in the construction of meaning and webs of relationships around texts. Additionally, the amount, duration, and types of conversation surrounding texts that children were encouraged to develop appear to relate to the modes of action in which children engage.

Table 2: Textual Importations Rubric: Adapted from Elster's (1995) Study

Category	Type of Importation	Examples
1	***Pictures*** The uses of these have to represent more than a reproduction of the original text and do so by being used to represent nontextual information.	Indications that child is attending to features in the pictures that are not mentioned specifically in the story (e.g., the child mentions a fish that is in the picture but not discussed in the story).
2	***Knowledge and Experience*** This is the use of background knowledge of the world and human motivations and child's personal experiences as he/she engages with the text.	Instances where the child makes statements about a character's motivations or actions, or makes connections across events in the story (e.g., the child states the feeling of the character, "He's mad.").
3	***Classroom Read-Aloud Discussions*** This is a child's use of memory of prior read-aloud sessions and the subsequent classroom discussion held about these when engaging with the text.	These are instances where the child used the pictures clues in conjunction with memory from previous discussions of background knowledge to comment on the text (e.g., the child elaborates upon the story being read using the 'language' of the teacher).
4	***Texts*** A child's linking of other books and nonbook texts with the context/content of the book currently being read.	These instances may include references to songs, TV shows, chants, movies, etc. (e.g., the child reads the text importing a refrain from a song).

Defining the Classroom Environment

It was found that prior to the use of a modified dialogic approach to reading the teacher consistently was the one who initiated any talk about text. She routinely accomplished this through commenting about the pictures found within a text, asking rhetorical questions, or discussing the meaning of a word perceived to be unfamiliar to the children. In these instances, the teacher did not appear to be interested in actually holding a discussion with the children, but merely appeared to employ this time as a period of apprenticeship in the use of language and talk that she perceived to be legitimate to draw upon when discussing books.Children's language that was legitimized in these instances was talk that demonstrated an (a) awareness of discontinuities, (b) concern about a literary genre, or (c) an awareness of an unfamiliar or unknown word. This type of conversational interaction privileged the talk of some of the students within the classroom, those who were able to conform to the teacher's schema for interacting with texts, while marginalizing the talk of others, those who were unaware or unfamiliar with this aspect of institutional talk.

It presupposed the allocation of rights of turn-taking to be for those children who were able to conform to the teacher's schema for operating with texts. Through the use of a return to a text, accomplished by the teacher's failure to acknowledge a comment, statement, or question made by a child during the reading of texts, the teacher was further able to establish her authority and control in classroom read-alouds as she privileged the talk of certain children in the class. In this way, the Discourses (Gee, 1989) of the class were further established and social patterns reinforced. For the children whose comments were perceived as not fitting within the existing schema of the teacher for the sharing of texts, access to participation in the construction of meaning was denied.

Environments such as this minimize the role of certain individuals in the classroom while legitimizing others. They do not promote a view of teaching and learning as one that is reciprocal and reflexive (Steffe & Thompson, 2000). Instead, the individual in control chooses to perpetuate a positivistic view of the process, in which there is information that is quantifiable and transferable from a more knowledgeable other to those less knowledgeable (see Schwandt, 1997, for discussion of positivism). As such, the development of intersubjectivity is, at best, minimized as children are forced to adapt to another's schema for operating and connecting with texts and others in the community. They are not provided the opportunity of participating in a generative framework for the creation of meanings and ways of thinking about texts that other environments promote.

To illustrate this idea the following example (Example 1) provides a description of interactions with texts that were typical in this classroom at the outset of the study. It reveals the opportunities that children were afforded and denied access to during the sharing of texts with the classroom teacher. For purposes of anonymity, pseudonyms have been assigned to each participating child.

Example 1: Initial Classroom Interactions with Texts

Classroom teacher (CT) reading from *The Three Little Pigs*: "The little pig got up at five. He went to Mr. Smiths' farm and he got the turnips before the wolf came to his house. **(Changes voice to represent wolf)** 'Little pig, are you ready?' said the wolf **(Changes voice to represent the pig)** 'Ready, I have been and come back again. And I got a nice pot full of turnips for my dinner.'"

Sam (Sa): The wolf is mad.

CT/ignores comment and continues to read: "The wolf was very angry. Well he thought of another way to get the pig….'I will come for you at five o'clock tomorrow morning and we will get some apples.'"

Michael (Mi): The little pig will wake up at four o'clock

CT/ignores comment and continues to read: "Well, the little pig got up the next morning at four o'clock and he went off for some apples. He wanted to get back home before the wolf came…"

In this example (Example 1), children are seen as not having much opportunity to participate in the sharing of a story. When they made attempts to do so, as Michael and Sam did, they were ignored as the teacher continued to read the story. In this way, an opportunity to develop an awareness of other's thinking in relation to texts, to make connections with other texts and the meanings that others were generating were greatly minimized. The meanings created in this exchange were limited to the individual allowed to engage with the text. At the outset of the study, the teacher was the sole determiner of the meaning that would be allowed or that could be created. She determined what would be discussed and who would be allowed to participate in the text sharing. Attempts by both Sam and Michael show that they connected with the text, that they understood the character's feelings, the way this version of the story was structured (e.g., Michael's anticipation of the little pig waking at four o'clock), and that they interacted and engaged with the text. However, their attempts to enter into a conversation around the text were ignored, and the meanings, understandings, and connections they made were not allowed to develop more fully.

Developing Intersubjectivity and Intertextual Connections

An example of developing intersubjectivity and intertextual connections can be found in children's responses to texts. They demonstrate that when given the opportunity to participate in the sharing of the construction of meaning(s) for text, children are able to and actively do work to create coherent renditions. The following example (Example 2) of a shared reading with the researcher provides an illustration of developing intersubjectivity that was typical for children who had engaged in the modified dialogic reading instruction. In it, the children hold a discussion about what was meant by the author's use of a certain word.

Example 2: Determining a Meaning for a Word

Researcher (R)/ reading from text: "…don't be a lazybones while we're away they said to Cinderella"
Sienna (Si): Hunh?
R: "don't be a lazybones…"
Holly (H)/ interrupting: That's mean…
R/restating H's comment: That is mean. Vanessa?
Vanessa (V): That means don't like…
Si: Lay down and get rest and sleep for a little while.
V: No, it means, uh, like, like you go to the ball and go and like if you see somebody you get, like in love
R: Oh, okay, Holly?
H: um, like you are lazy
R/restating H's comment: So, you are saying it means that you are lazy and they are telling her to not lay around the house. Let's see what the story says **(back to reading)**

Sienna's 'Hunh?' indicates that she does not quite understand what is occurring in the story. As the researcher rereads the text, other children become aware of her difficulty. Holly's interruption, through the use of an emotive response ('That's mean'), demonstrates that she might have, as of yet, been unaware of Sienna's difficulty. When Vanessa attempts to clarify what the unfamiliar word means, she demonstrates that she does understand that a difficulty is being experienced. Sienna's abrupt re-entry into the conversation indicates that she has arrived at a possible explanation herself for what 'lazybones' might be. It appears that she has been sorting the meaning out for herself as other talked. Sienna's explanation indicates that she is associating the word with something she knows to be lazy, lying down, and that 'lazybones' is a temporary condition since it occurs for only a short while. Vanessa, however, was obviously not heading in the same direction with her possible meaning, and she states this ('No'). Vanessa appeared to be unsatisfied to leave it as merely a contradiction and attempts to relate her knowledge of how the story of *Cinderella* works (there is a ball and Cinderella falls in love with a prince). Holly, on the other hand, does not appear to be satisfied to leave the meaning where Vanessa has directed the discussion, and returns to more of an authoritative stance by stating simply that it means, "…you are lazy."

In the end, no formal definition is produced for the word. The opportunities to further explore possible meanings for the unfamiliar word were left open. However, "joint attention" (Tomasello, 1988) has been evidenced in the children's attempts to resolve a classmate's difficulty. There is an acknowledgement of another's difficulty and the participants, in this exchange, attempted to meet the difficulty by forming a meaning for the unfamiliar word socially. In their attempts to do so, the children became aware of one another's thinking, adding and subtracting from the comments made, developing a multiplicity of possibilities for it.

As children worked to resolve the difficulty in this exchange, they drew upon their knowledge of the world and their experiences within it to form a connection with the text. They made importations as they participated in the process of constructing meaning, as Sienna did with the category 2 importations that initiated this interaction. Her awareness of not understanding an unfamiliar word and subsequent movement beyond this need to one of clarification signifies that she has an expectation for texts; that they need to make sense. Holly's importations from previous classroom discussions ("That's mean." and "…you are lazy.") indicate that she connected with the texts in a way that drew upon her awareness of the authority of the teacher. She related back to how Cinderella was treated, as well as attempted to co-opt teacher-like authority in her use of language and the role of knowledgeable other. The first of these importations provides opportunities for further discussion to occur, while the second allowed the reading to resume, both of which are teacher-like behaviors and as such can be seen as category 2 importations. However, these were not the only importations to occur. When Vanessa talks about the ball and falling in love, she makes a category 4 importation. She connects her understandings of a previously read version of *Cinderella* with the one currently being read. Although the importation fails to provide a plausible meaning for the unfamiliar word, it did provide more opportunities for discussion.

Example 3: Discussing Discrepancies

Jake (J): And guess what? I see a few stars in the background
R: I see them too
Nicole (N): Don't the, the shoes change into something?
R: Right
N: It never showed it turned into something in the movie or in any of the stories

R/restating or rephrasing question: I know. I wonder why the shoes don't turn back. If everything else turns back, why doesn't her shoe turn back?

J: Maybe they turn back a little later

R: Maybe later it happens, maybe because they aren't together they won't turn back, I don't know. That's a good question, though, Nicole.

J: But it might have been past midnight when she was still in there and they, they should have turned back to what they were.

R: Exactly, if she would have stayed in there, they should have turned back. I agree.

This example (Example 3) followed a discussion of what had been occurring in the story in which Cinderella's clothing changed back into rags at the stroke of midnight, as had all the other things that magic created. It was initiated by a child. For Nicole, there appeared to be a flaw in the story, since the shoes did not change (i.e., return to their pre-magic form). Nicole's comment demonstrates that she is aware of the story's flaw and would like it to be corrected. As she further engages with the text by making connections with her knowledge of other movies and books of Cinderella, she re-states this need. So, the researcher steps in by re-stating the question, wondering aloud, as Nicole did, in an attempt to elicit more conversation around this predicament. This musing aloud provides an opportunity for others to participate in the discussion and potential resolution to this difficulty.

Jake attempts to resolve Nicole's difficulties by referring to the features of the story (i.e., that it is after midnight), but appears to become ensnared in the dilemma that he was attempting to resolve. The possible alternatives that he proposes did not appear to satisfy him, and he returns to a re-statement of Nicole's problem. It is at this time that, again, the researcher intervenes. However, she provides comments that are in accordance with the children's thoughts about Cinderella's shoes. By refraining from providing an alternative that might have been perceived as the only correct solution, the researcher demonstrates for the children that it is okay not to have all of the answers to a question and that there may not be an answer for a particular problem.When Nicole questions an apparent flaw in the story, she makes a category 3 importation. She questions in a manner similar to the one modeled in the classroom by the researcher, incorporating her knowledge of the world, and previous discussions. She continues to expand on this questioning; drawing further upon her knowledge of other texts in an attempt to resolve the dilemma experienced. This is a category 4 importation. The connections that Nicole makes with the text illustrate an understanding of her role in the meaning constructing process, one of active noticing. In this role, Nicole appears to understand that if she perceives that something is amiss, she is to bring it to the attention of all involved in the sharing of the text.

In the beginning of this exchange, when Jake discusses the stars, he is connecting with elements in the picture that were not found in the story, a category 1 importation. As he becomes aware of the difficulties that Nicole brought to light, Jake attempts to resolve them by relating something he had learned about the world, that it sometimes requires more time for things to change, a category 2 importation. Jake continued to work to resolve the difficulties by referring back to the features of the story (that it is after midnight), a category 3 importation. Even though he was unsuccessful in resolving the difficulty, his attempts to use understandings of classroom discussions, in which features of the text had been referred to as a means for determining solutions, demonstrates an awareness of alternate ways for solving a problem.

Finding One. The findings of this analysis indicate that the number of importations made by children can be altered through a teacher's instructional approach. They suggest that when children are provided with the opportunity to interact with texts in ways that are meaningful to them, such as through the modified dialogic based reading instructional approach, that they do. This suggests that the number of importations children make is a malleable feature of their meaning making process.

One can also infer from these findings that if the number of importations that children make increase, then so, too, are their understandings of the texts with which they are engaging. It seems natural to extend this line of thinking to include the possibility that these understandings of texts involve a multiplicity of meanings. It must be recognized that the instruction received by the children provided them with a means for talking about the intertextual importations that they were making; it is this ability to talk about what connections are made that is further refined as their types of importations become more sophisticated. These examples (Examples 2 and 3) of children's interactions with texts illustrate that the children within this group were learning from each other, socially constructing meanings for the text.

They show that children were developing intersubjectivity as they made intertextual importations, demonstrating that when given the opportunity to transact with texts, young children were able to use some medium (i.e., spoken language, gestures, etc.) to develop an understanding of the purposeful intelligence of others (Trevarthen, 2001). As a result, these children appear to better understand their role and the roles of others in the process of meaning making, developing an awareness of the multiplicity of understandings for the text that others in the community are generating.

Adapting Types of Connections Made

Children engaged in the conversation found in the following example (Example 4) were again examining the meaning of an unfamiliar word found in a shared text. In this conversation, they are able to share viewpoints with one another and to develop an awareness of the multiplicity of understandings for a text within the community. Such awareness has the potential for illuminating the multiplicity of ways that a person is able to think about the world around him or her and the avenues available for making connections between it and the texts being read. These experiences afford the opportunity for children to create ever expanding interpretive frameworks (Rowe, 1987) that are generative in nature.

Example 4: Speculating on the Meaning of a Word

Researcher (R)/ reading from the story *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*: "I've got two spears. I'll knock your eyeballs out of your ears."
Children/laugh
R/continuing to read: "I've got two flat stones. I'll crush you to bits, body and bone."
Spike (Sp): This is going to be good!
Holly (H): Hunh? I don't get that.
Children: His horns
R/ restating children's comments: His horns could be spears. I think that is a good idea. Have you ever seen a spear before?
Children: yea's and no's
R: Well, what do spears look like?
Si: They are big, round things that you use so you don't get hurt.
Sp: Um, they're uh, it's um a rock think look like, I forget what the name of it is, tied to a stick.
J: It's like an arrow (**gesturing with his hands to indicate a large size**)
R/restating J's comment: It's like an arrow, but it's really, really big.
Si: and metal
R: and, some of them are metal. So, these are really long and pointy at the end (R pointing to the goat's horns in the picture). So, what are the two flat stones?
Britney (B): His horns
Si: Horns are spears
R: The horns were spears, so (**interrupted by next child**)
H: his hands
J: his paws
R: His paws, his feet. Let's read to see what he does with his spears and stones. (**R reads texts**) "…And that was what the big billy goat did."
J: He pushed him off
R: He pushed him off, yeah
Children clap
R/ resumes reading: "And after that the goats went up the hillside…and so, snip, snap, snout this tale's told out."
Si laughs
Jessica (Je): That's silly
Si: This one's kind of different from the original one
R: Is it kind of different? Why do you think it's different Sienna?
Si: Because the big horns

There are several things to notice in this transaction with text and others in the classroom (Example 4) in terms of children's developing intersubjectivity and the intertextual connections they are making.

The first is that a child initiated this interaction with the text and others. Spike was anticipating what was about to happen in the story; he relied on his understandings of how beings operate in the world based upon past experiences and connections with the text. His comment established openings for other students to join in the constructing of meaning with the researcher, a more knowledgeable other. Other children, such as Jake, attempted to enter the discussion by making statements about what was occurring. When Jake stated, "He (the goat) pushed him off," he made a category 1 importation. He used information found within the picture, which was not explicitly stated in the story to create a link. He used this type of information to connect with the text based upon information found within it, and to provide an avenue for gaining entry into class discussion and meaning making.Holly's comment following Spike's suggested that she was experiencing difficulty in understanding what was being implied in text, that she did not appear to understand what Spike was alluding to, and that further clarification was warranted. The rejoinder issued by the other children in class suggested that they understood and were anticipating the next action in the text. The comments they made may have been to alleviate some of the tension Holly was experiencing. The role of the researcher served to facilitate the process of meaning making through the restatement and expansion of phrases so that fuller shared understandings could occur for the members of this community. Her actions scaffolded (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) the emerging behaviors of the novices, so that they could begin to employ similar actions in their interactions with texts. Instances such as this demonstrate that children within this community attempted to fill this role as well.

Additionally, there were instances when a child appeared to fail to recognize another's misunderstandings. At these times, other children assumed more active roles in the discussion by providing multiple ways of stating a similar idea. This occurred in Britney and Sienna's exchange about what the two flat stones might be. Sienna's use of something that she had had difficulty with previously (i.e., the goat's horns as spears), but that she then understood, suggests that she may not have grasped why Britney did not see that the goat's horns had only one use and therefore could not be the stones. It was in this instance that both Holly and Jake responded, and their responses were used to further clarify what could be meant by two flat stones. When Jessica said, "That's silly," she made a category 2 importation, creating a link with the text based upon her knowledge and experience of the world. In order for her to be able to determine if something is silly or not, she has to compare it with an existing schema for what defines "silly." The use of this type of importation of linking with the text represents a connection to the text that occurs on a more personal level than the previous category. It requires that the children identify with something in the text and something that they know or have previously experienced.

Holly and Jakes' responses fulfill the need for clarification that occurred in Britney and Sienna's discussion about what the two flat stones were and can be classified as category 3 importations. In their responses, Holly and Jake built upon their previous knowledge and experiences, the information found within the picture, as well as recalled details of classroom discussions that had come before, in an attempt to provide the necessary clarification. In this sense, they were using the language of the community to create a link with text that further clarified and met the recognized need of another. Category 4 importations, as the most refined connections that children have been found to make, are seen in this exchange as well. Jake provided an example of this type of importation when he helped to clarify what a spear is. He said, "It's like an arrow," and used a gesture in conjunction with language to further illustrate what he meant. In so doing, he demonstrated flexibility in his use of sources of information to create meaning(s) for what is read.

The children's statements in the next example (Example 5) indicate that they were indeed listening to the other children involved in the telling of this story. Each response expanded a bit upon the previous, providing a more detailed rendering of the story's events at this moment. To do this, the children drew upon their knowledge of the world and experiences within it (category 2) to make connections with the text and provide richer detail for the events. They also incorporated elements of previous class discussions (category 3) involving statements about why they might visit their grandmother.

Example 5: Felt Board Re-enactment of *Little Red Riding Hood*

R: Once there was a little girl named Little Red Riding Hood…
V: Her was taking some cookies to her grandmother to make.
R: Why?
V: Her was sick.
Hannah (Ha): Her mom told her to.
Ron (Ro): To make her feel better.

The responses the children gave were evolving. They were flexible, with slight shifts in meaning construction occurring as they added to each other's statements. These shifts indicate the children held an awareness of the possibilities for the meanings of this story and demonstrate that they were connecting with it.

In the next example (example 6), Jessica demonstrated an awareness of others' understanding through the statements she incorporated in her telling of the story. She produced an amalgamation of information found within the picture (category 1), her knowledge and experiences in the world (category 2), and other versions of the story (category 4) to produce a fairly unified version for the story of *The Three Bears*.

Example 6: Excerpt from Jessica's Emergent Reading

> **Je**: Well, there's three little bears who lived in the forest. And, they had chairs and beds. And a little girl named Goldilocks came in and she at the, the porridge. She tried papa bear's but it was too hot. And she tried mama bear's but it was still too hot. And she tried the baby bear's and it was just right and se ate it all up. The she tried papa bear's chair, tried mama bear's chair, and she tried baby bear's chair. And she rocked and rocked in it until she broke it. She went up, and then she went, the she went up the stairs. She found three beds. She tried the papa bear's and it was too hard. And, she tried the mama bear's but it was too soft. She tried the baby bear's and it was just right.

Jessica in this example (example 6) infused her knowledge of the world and experiences (category 2) through her inclusion of the forest (where bears live) and that the name Goldilocks was usually attached to this little girl. She mentioned beds and chairs, based upon the things found in the picture (category 1) several pages before they are actually mentioned in the story. She added a refrain from another version of the story ('And she rocked and rocked in it until she broke it') making connection between the two versions. It is through these connections that Jessica demonstrated awareness for the understandings of others that occurred around her. The incorporation of this information outside of the text enabled her to develop a richer telling of the story, and provided her with the opportunity to reveal her thinking in the process.

Finding Two. An idea that can be extrapolated from the findings of the analyses of these examples (Examples 4, 5, and 6) is that when a child is in an environment in which he or she has the ability to create and discuss his or her importations with others, the development of intersubjectivity appears to develop. This occurs as the child is exposed to multiple meanings for texts generated by peers. In such an environment, children are able to be flexible in the identification and assumption of meanings that are created by others in the class. This is especially true for those that run contrary to a child's original interpretation or notion of how the story would work. In this way, children are allowed to have a voice and participatory role in the meaning construction process for the text.

Another point of interest here is that the children appear to have developed an affective response to the text being read. They laughed and clapped to show their understandings, not only of what was occurring in the text, but also to demonstrate that they identified with these occurrences on both a personal and social level. It was their understanding of another's subjectivity as being something similar to their own, which enabled them to make intuitive judgments about what others in the class were thinking (Ritblatt, 2000), as well as to develop an affective response to text. In this way, they demonstrated the role of intersubjectivity in their meaning construction.

The experiences and occasions to talk and discuss with others afforded through participation in a modified dialogic based approach to reading instruction provided the children with opportunities to develop the ability to speak about more refined connections with texts. It was through these connections and awareness of others' thinking that the children were able to construct multiple meanings for what occurred in text. They were able to listen to others' thoughts and ideas, incorporate this novel information with the meanings and understandings that they were already creating to form a more complex rendering of a story.

Who Makes Intertextual Importations

Large group instructional formats provide occasions for children to learn and hear from one another. It is a time that occurs in the classroom where Discourses (Gee, 1992), established through daily interactions, come to light. It is in these instances that some young voices can be heard (i.e., those that know the language of authority) while others are silenced (i.e., those who are unfamiliar with or unaware of the differences between the Discourses of their environments). What follows is a large group discussion in which the roles and opportunities for developing intersubjectivity and making intertextual connections are examined.

Example 7: Large Group Discussion on Determining What is Real

V: That is not real.
R: How do you know?
V: Wolves don't have big mouths.
R: They don't?
Si: Yes, they do.
V: They only got big cheeks.
R: Oh.
V: That's how you know.
R: Dallas?
Dallas (D): 'Cause wolves can't talk.
R/ restating D's comment: So, wolves can't talk is another way to know that this is not real.

Vanessa provided the impetus for discussion through her statement that the story is not real. In making such a statement, she positioned herself to use recently acquired knowledge, that of real versus not real in her discussion. This action provided an avenue for discussion to follow, which was further supported by the researcher asking, "How do you know?" This caused Vanessa to provide an additional piece of information that enabled others in the community to better determine her line of thinking.

Sienna, however, countered the statement of how Vanessa said she knew. She disagreed with what was said, and in doing so, established a point of entry for other possibilities. Vanessa, not convinced by Sienna's confrontation, continued to explain what she meant by big mouths. She refined her initial statement by saying that they have big cheeks, as is seen in the illustrations, and that is how you know. Dallas, though, is not convinced and posits another way of knowing that this is not a real story in his statement that wolves cannot talk. The researcher reinforced the idea of multiple possible meanings through her comments. This established a method for interacting with texts in which the children could openly discuss their understandings for a text at any particular moment, and reinforced that there is not only one meaning possible.

When Vanessa stated, "That is not real" she made a connection with the text. She connected her knowledge and experience with the world, the discussions held in class about what made something real or not, and applied this to the text currently being read. This was a category 4 importation, which incorporated external sources of information with the information found within the book to help establish a more unified rendering of the text. She further expanded upon this understanding when she said, "Wolves don't have big mouths." In this link, she drew further on her knowledge of wolves and their mouths to determine that the story being read could not be real. By drawing upon her experience of knowledge of the world, she made a category 2 importation.When Sienna countered with her own understandings of wolves, she too made a category 2 importation. Her refutation of Vanessa's comment about wolves' mouths not being big enough indicated that she had an understanding contrary to Vanessa's. Even though she did not elaborate on her understanding, her contradiction provided enough of an impetus for Vanessa to further comment.

In her next comment, "They only got big cheeks." Vanessa drew upon information found exclusively in the pictures of the book to make a connection with the text. As a category 1 importation, she linked with information not found within the text, but that which was present in the picture. Her final comment affirmed her way of knowing about wolves and how that determined if this story was real or not. The act of affirming her way of knowing was a category 2 importation, relating to knowledge of the world and experience. When Dallas commented that wolves cannot talk, he demonstrated his knowledge of animals and that they do not talk as humans do. He coupled this information with the understandings he gained from the previous day's discussion in the library of what could and could not be real, a category 3 importation.

For many children, instruction in a small group format enables them to participate more fully in the discussion of the class. It appears that in smaller groups, children who are hesitant to participate in whole class discussion are likely to be more engaged and participatory (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2002). The following example (Example 8) illustrates the interactions found in small group sharing of texts.

Example 8: Small Group Answering Each Other's Questions

H: What was here regular name?
R: I don't…
V/interrupting: I think it was princess.

R/restating V's statement: You think it was princess
V: Princess Fiona
R: Oh from Shrek! Princess Fiona. Spike?
Sp: Um…Cindy
R: Cindy, maybe it was Cindy. Those are good ideas. Let's see if it ells us (**back to reading the story**)

This example (Example 8) provides another illustration of children's developing intersubjectivity. Here again, a child initiated the discussion. Holly's question about Cinderella's 'real' name indicated that she is aware of many things, that people and characters in stories have names that are often shortened or changed by the members of their community. In this particular version, the text shared how it was from this point forward that the widow's daughter was called Cinderella. This clue from the text, as well as Holly's knowledge of how people are named, indicated that she was experiencing difficulty with accepting the 'new' name for this character and needed some further clarification. Such a question provided an opportunity for others in the class to join in the process of constructing and understanding of the character (i.e., Cinderella). Vanessa joined in the meaning construction process by offering a possible answer for Holly's question by using her understandings of fairytales in suggesting that the name might be princess. She further expanded on this by incorporating the name of a princess that she is familiar with from a recent movie, *Shrek!*.

However, Spike was not entirely sold on this idea and provided an additional alternative, a condensed from of the name Cinderella, Cindy. Spike drew upon his awareness of how names can be shortened to form nicknames in the provision of this alternate possibility. While no clear distinction or determination of Cinderella's real name was made in this discussion, the three children demonstrated that they were aware that there are possibilities for what it might be. They were aware that there are possibilities for what it might be. They were able to listen to one another and provide suitable alternatives to solve Holly's quandary. The development of these possibilities, as well as the multiple ways the children were able to generate them, is intersubjectivity.

Findings of importations can be seen to be similar as previous examples. In this example (Example 8), Holly, Vanessa, and Spike all made category 2 importations. Each child used his or her knowledge of the world and personal experiences to connect with the text. Holly's question, that initiated the discussion about names, and Vanessa's and Spike's provisions of possible names, demonstrated that these children were aware that characters like people, have names that they are called and 'real' or other names they are given. However, when Vanessa adds Fiona to the word princess, she made a leap in the type of importing that she made. It was not enough for her to simply say princess. Vanessa's understandings of the names of royal characters in stories, as well as making a link with a text purely external to the story, *Shrek!*, expands the connection she made. The flexibility with which this connection was made illustrates the refinement that occurs in category 4 importations.

Finding Three. These finding suggest that smaller, more intimate settings allow for more children to interact with the texts being read-aloud. Smaller group settings allowed for the occurrence of more group discussions of the text being read. It was found that in these smaller setting children who did not participate or participated minimally in whole class discussions, engaged with the text being shared and began to make or made more importations. The small group setting provided children who were not as comfortable in the whole class setting the opportunity to play a more active role in the construction of meanings for texts. In these settings, children heard and discussed with one another the meanings they created and ones that were different from their own. These interactions, in a manner similar to the whole class instruction, provided an opportunity for the intersubjectivity of the children to further develop and refine.

Implications

This study expands upon the findings of earlier research in intertextuality and emergent literacy as well as further explores the role young children play in the construction of meaning. It suggests that instructional practices can and do alter the types of importations children make and subsequently the meanings they construct in their interactions with texts. It also suggests that the participatory nature of children within the sharing of texts is critical to their developing understanding of the role they play in meaning making. These findings suggest that instructional techniques can be designed to enhance young children's abilities to construct meaning around texts. The ability to connect personal experiences and knowledge of the world, as well as to connect classroom discussions of texts with unfamiliar or new ones, is something that children do well.

By developing instructional methods instructional methods and techniques such as the modified dialogic approach to reading instruction found here, teachers will be better able to build from what children already do well and foster intertextual connections. It is these types of importations that help children develop additional ways of interacting with and responding to texts, creating a multitude of meanings for them.

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