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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1990
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I am especially appreciative of my collaborators who shared their children and their family literacy events so freely over a long period of time to make possible the collection of the data which informs this study. Thanks also to Lesley Fawcett for the many patient and painstaking hours taken in the initial typing of the transcripts and thesis, and to Doreen Dickinson for her excellent presentation of the final manuscript.

Thanks must be given to my family whose love, understanding and constant support have sustained me throughout and finally, very special thanks to the children who have shared their learning with me, and in doing so have taught me so much.
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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CHAPTER ONE

PICTURE STORY BOOK READING FROM AN EMERGENT LITERACY LEARNER'S PERSPECTIVE

Children's oral language development in the preschool years has long been of interest to researchers and educators and has been well documented. However, only in comparatively recent years has it been recognised that considerable written language development is also taking place during this time in the everyday contexts of home and community as children observe and experiment with the use of this form of communication.

Over the past decade researchers from a variety of disciplines and perspectives have investigated the ways in which preschool children, albeit not conventionally, read and write. This area of research, which focuses on children in the process of becoming literate, is termed emergent literacy and represents

a new perspective which stresses that legitimate conceptual developmental literacy learning is occurring during the first years of a child's life.

(Sulzby, 1985:2)

In a literate society such as ours, the picture of the written language user that is emerging from the literature is one of an active seeker of meaning constantly constructing and transforming knowledge concerning written language through interaction with the people, artefacts and events that shape his world.
AIM AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study builds on previous research and extends current thinking concerning emergent literacy by adopting a semiotic perspective to investigate:

(1) the strategies that emergent literacy learners use to negotiate meaning between other language users and the texts during repeated experiences with favourite picture story books over an extended period of time:

(2) the links that learners make between past and current experiences with favourite picture story books and other life and literacy events.

The project focuses on the perspective of the child in the construction of meaning in his social world and develops a grounded theory concerning the relationship between story reading and the development of strategies related to the process of reading.

RATIONALE

The belief that hearing stories read aloud contributes directly to emergent literacy development and reading development in particular is accepted almost without question by parents, researchers and educators (Tolstoy, 1892; Huey, 1908; Smith, 1978; Clay, 1979). Picture story book reading is a prominent feature of many homes and many classrooms. However, despite this widespread belief and acceptance, the precise nature of any insights about the process of reading, and the ways in which these insights are derived from being read to, have been assumed rather than demonstrated in detail.
Recent studies into other aspects of emergent literacy learning consistently focus on the active role of the learner as a meaning maker and the strategies that learners use to make sense of the literacy that is part of their home and community life (Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Bissex, 1980; Goodman, 1981, 1984; Heath, 1984; Graves, 1978). Current classroom practice, particularly that of teachers working from a whole language approach, reflect aspects of this research.

A whole language approach, as defined by Cambourne (1989) 'means that the literacy act or artefact being demonstrated needs to be sufficiently "whole" to provide enough information about the various systems and subsystems of language, so that learners, if they decide to engage, will have the data available for working out how all the pieces fit together and interact with each other' (p.204). The focus of such classrooms is on process and this has transformed the ways in which literacy is taught and evaluated. Story reading remains a consistent feature in these literacy programs, and in recent years this practice has been extended to the use of large shared books, which build on and extend the notion of story reading into a method of teaching children to read. The conceptualisation of these shared books and the theory underlying their use is based on belief in the potential of the bedtime story as a powerful introduction to learning to read.

Although research concerning picture story book reading has focused on the affective and linguistic benefits of this practice (Holdaway, 1978; Doake, 1981; Butler, 1979) and the role of the parent or teacher as mediator in the experience (Snow and Ninio, 1986; DeLoache and DeMendoza, 1986; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Dombey, 1989), it has failed
to investigate the role of the central figure, the child, as an active meaning maker. Research is needed to fill this gap in theoretical understandings concerning the relationship between picture story book reading and the development of strategies related to the process of reading. Such information will provide teachers with valuable understandings upon which to base their selection and use of picture story books and shared books as an integral part of a total language program.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY
Reading stories aloud to children is a feature of most primary schools and as a teacher, and lecturer in literacy I have observed and been part of many instances of story reading in a wide variety of settings. While the rituals of picture story book reading are seemingly universal, I have observed important differences within this common practice. In many of the schools that I work in, children come to school with very little picture story book experience. Unfortunately, the books that teachers choose to read to them quite often reveal a similar background of experience and understanding. The children are not invited to interact with any aspect of the book before or during the reading. However, when the story is finished, they are often questioned about the content of the story on the assumption that they will have followed the text closely, understood the points that the teacher took from the story, and will be able to reiterate the exact sequence of events and every character.

In other classrooms in these schools, teachers select books that they and the children will find enjoyable and useful and treat the children as significant partners in the reading experience from the outset.
Meaning making is paramount and the teachers share their thinking out loud and invite the children to do the same; encourage and respectfully respond to the children’s predictions; continually make life to text and text to life connections and accept the children’s involvement at the level at which they are currently operating. Many other story reading situations fall somewhere between these two extremes.

As the use of shared texts grew commonplace in early childhood classrooms, I again observed the continuum from the mechanistic teacher who reduced these texts to a skills vehicle, to the teachers who used them in meaningful, purposeful contexts and made the use of shared texts a lived through experience that provided many demonstrations and opportunities for children to engage in literacy use. Disturbingly, all of these teachers were purporting to be using what they termed whole language through the use of these texts.

The development and use of shared texts is based on belief in the power of the bedtime story experience as an introduction to reading. In the words of Holdaway (1978) a pioneer in this approach, such experiences should be ‘joyous’ and include ‘memorable texts’ which children would want to return to over and over again. Clearly there were dramatic variations in the ways in which this eminently sound and humanely expressed theory was being translated into school use.

I had recently published my first shared text for use with emergent readers and writers and my concerns with the ways in which such books were being used caused me to reflect on why it was happening and what it was that teachers needed to understand about the bedtime story experience. I knew from first hand experience the amount of thought that had gone into every feature as my book was crafted, in an effort to
ensure that children would be ‘invited in’ by the language, the concepts and the illustrations and would be able to experience some sense of being a reader from their first encounter with it. Layers of meaning had been built into the language and illustrations to enable teachers and children to revisit the book and discover new insights as their understandings grew. It had also been important to write a text that lent itself readily to improvisation to allow for teachers and children to eventually take ownership by using the framework to write and illustrate their own story and live through the processes of being both the author and illustrator.

The writing of the book was underpinned by my theoretical understandings and stance concerning emergent literacy learning and guided and informed by my experiences with young children and their responses to the many books we had shared together. Throughout the writing I was never without images of children in my mind and the ways I imagined them responding to each element that I built for them to discover in the process of becoming readers and writers.

Reflecting further on these experiences I asked a number of teachers what guided them in their choices of shared texts and children's literature and found the replies of those who had the interactive shared book sessions consistently included their children and how they imagined these children would respond to particular books. In other words, each of us regarded the learners as the prime element of the shared text experience, saw them as active partners and expected them to have strategies and interests to bring to the sharing while at the same time expecting to use the texts to involve them in the use of further strategies.
This thinking about learners and about texts is very similar to that of parents of preschool children who regularly discussed choosing children’s books and their children’s responses to these books with me, and gradually I began to entertain the idea of carrying out a study of bedtime story reading with very young children in an effort to illuminate what it was in shared story reading that influenced the process of learning to read. I hypothesised that in looking at a situation where children behaved as if they already were readers and were responded to as if they were readers, it might be possible to see what strategies they developed and used to sustain their deepening involvement in the experiences. Such insights could provide important understandings for early childhood teachers in their choice and use of shared texts.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE
The theoretical framework of this study incorporates a semiotic perspective. In this theory, semiosis is the process by which humans interpret acts and artefacts as signs within a particular culture to make sense of their world. Because the fundamental concern of semiotics is the construction of meaning, it becomes a powerful tool to examine young children’s literacy learning. The work of Peirce (1932, cited in Innes, 1985:5) provides the foundation for this research perspective. The semiotic focal point of Peirce’s work is ‘the fundamental trichotomy of the ways a sign can be related via an ‘interpretant’ to its object’. Peirce asserts that direct knowledge of the world is not possible, but that all knowledge is mediated by signs. Each sign has the potential to be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the past experiences of the user both with life and literacy, and with the circumstances of use.
Peirce, who saw semiosis as unlimited or infinite in principle, describes it as the coming together of three elements, a representamen, its object, and an interpretant. He states,

a sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, it creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object, not in all respects but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen.

(Peirce, 1932, cited in Innes, 1985:5)

The representamen is a sign vehicle which represents an object. In Peirce’s theory, the object is a cultural sign or hypothesis, not a physical referent. It describes a set of possible experiences and its meaning resides in its use. The interpretant is a second sign, which is called up in the mind of the person engaged in the process of interpretation and is the way the object is manifested as meaning (Eco, 1979:184).

![Figure 1 (a): The Semiotic Triad](image)
When viewing reading with the pre-schoolers through semiotic theory, the picture book is the representamen, the pre-schoolers hypotheses about the meaning of the text are the object, and the "poem" is the interpretant or meaning which is actualised by the reader.

![Figure 1 (b): Picture Story Book Reading: A Semiotic Perspective](image)

Every sign has the potential of being interpreted in a variety of ways, but it is the circumstance of its use in the social world which determines the meaning which is actualised (Siegel, 1984). As shown in Figure 2, each act of interpretation of the text potential will be unique because it involves a transaction between the individual's current history, the purpose, and the available social and linguistic codes.
S. Nice num nums where colour at?

M. The caterpillar ate through one piece of S. Piece of 1, 4, 5.

S. Other one dies. Caterpillar dies.

Figure 2: Interpretations of two pages of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' over several months of data collection.
A Transactional View of Reading

To adopt this theoretical stance is to adopt a transactional view of reading, in which reading is seen as a negotiation of meanings between reader and writer, an event occurring in the context of time and space. The author’s text serves as a potential from which the reader constructs a unique meaning based on his or her current world and language knowledge.

A transactional view necessitates a participant rather than an outsider view of reading as a meaning making process. The researcher must assume that the reader has a theory of what kind of meaning is appropriate, given the text and context, and that no matter how inappropriate a response may seem, it is part of the sign system of the reader in the search for meaning. As Smith (1984) states:

The sense that children make ... is sense that is part of the world that they are creating. This world is one in which the children themselves are agents, if only in their imagination or vicariously using written language in the process of achieving ends.

(p.152)

Transaction and Literacy Learning

A semiotic perspective suggests that communication is an open system and that variation in interpretation is expected. Each act of interpretation will be unique because it involves a transaction between the individual’s current mental state and the available textual clues.

The transactional theory as proposed by Rosenblatt (1978) argues that reading is fundamentally a negotiation of meanings between reader and writer, an event occurring in the context of time and space. In this transaction, both the text and the reader contribute to the construction of meaning, and each shape and are shaped by the other. The author's
text serves as a potential from which the reader constructs a unique meaning, or as Rosenblatt describes it "a poem". Rosenblatt explains the contribution of the text and the reader in the following passage:

The words in their particular pattern stir up elements of memory, activate areas of consciousness. The reader, bringing past experience of language and of the world to the task, sets up tentative notions of a subject, of some framework into which to fit the ideas as the words unfurl. If the subsequent words do not fit into the framework, it may have to be revised, thus opening up new and further possibilities for the text that follows. This implies a constant series of selections from the multiple possibilities offered by the text and their synthesis into an organised meaning.

(p.268)

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The study consists of two case studies which describe and analyse the experiences which two pre-schoolers have with favourite picture story books and social literacy events over a period of fifteen months and three years respectively. It is a collaborative study with parents as co-researchers. As such it employs a naturalistic mode of enquiry.

Both children came from working class, two parent families and at the commencement of the study were only children. One child has two working parents and he attends a child care centre during the week. The other child is at home as her mother does not go out to work, and this child attends kindergarten on two half days a week. During the study a second child has been born into this family.

Each family utilises literacy for a variety of purposes and both children are interested and involved, and their involvement is accepted as a matter of course. The forms of literacy and the ways in which literacy are used are manifested in quite different ways, providing countless demonstrations to these young informants.

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The parents of the first child are forty years old. One parent has spent most of his life in Denmark where he was born, the other is Australian born. Danish is spoken frequently, and Danish songs and folklore and Danish speaking friends are an overt part of language and literacy use. Both parents enjoy newspapers, reading and hobby books, brochures, magazines and reference materials. The mother is a teacher librarian and places high value on reading to the child.

The parents of the second child are in their mid twenties. One parent was born in England but has spent most of his life in Australia. The other was born in New Zealand, but has also lived in Australia for most of her life. Both parents are avid readers of newspapers, news magazines, music and sewing books, recipe books, other reference materials and advertising. Letters and postcards are an important feature of this family’s life as the father’s work frequently takes him away from home and the writing and receiving of letters is an important feature of family communication. During this study the preparation for, and arrival of a new baby meant that knitting and sewing patterns were a focal point for some time.

While each child enjoys picture story books both independently and as a shared experience, picture story book routines are very different due to living routines and parents’ attitudes to reading. As the first mother goes out to full time work, the routine of the bedtime story fits in with the lifestyle of the family, although stories are frequently enjoyed during the day at weekends. The procedures for story reading follow a set pattern of discussion concerning the title of the book and the author, prediction concerning meaning, life to text and text to life links, and quite a focus on aspects of print. Although a good deal of dialogue
accompanies the reading, the surface features of the print are considered to be very important. During independent story reading this child memorises and reiterates stories almost verbatim, or alternatively retells versions that are filled with drama, sound effects and improvisations.

The second child often shares a story in bed in the mornings, and may have another story or stories during the day during some quiet time in their daily routines. These story sharing sessions are relaxed and informal with the focus on meaning and enjoyment. Interactions between the child, the parents and the book vary, according to the book and according to her chosen focus at the time of reading. At times she chooses to just listen, at other times she seeks interactive involvement, and her responses are accepted and supported. During the day she will often go independently to her books, pore over pictures and talk about them, retell the stories in her own words from the pictures, or she will carry some books to wherever her mother is working and 'read' to herself out loud, involving her mother as audience and responder. Both children enjoy their books. They include them in their play and take them to bed, on car trips, on visits. Books are very much a part of their lives.

This study aims to address the issues outlined in this section. In summary form these are:

(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 story reading and the development of strategies related to the process of reading.

The following chapter provides an overview and discussion of research concerning emergent literacy that impinges on and guides the study, both methodologically and theoretically. The methodology used to create the case studies is described in Chapter Three and Chapter Four describes and discusses the data. Chapter Five focuses on the conclusions that can be drawn from the study, and recommendations based on these conclusions are described in Chapter Six.
Experience in being read to is a prominent feature in the literature reporting on emergent literacy. Such experience has a long history. Writing of it as the first 'rational and immutable method of teaching reading'. Tolstoy (1862) termed it the domestic method as it consisted of the teacher reading to the children as a parent would read to their child. He stated:

this method will always remain the best and only one for teaching people to read and read fluently.  

(p.264)

While Edmund Huey (1908) was to write:

the secret of it all lies in parents reading to and with their children. Many a child cannot remember when reading began, having pored over books and nursery jingles and fairy tales that were read to him until he could read them for himself.  

(p.332)

Researchers, educators and parents remain in general agreement that reading to and with their children is beneficial and provides a sound basis for learning to read. The benefits have long been taken for granted and reading aloud is a common practice in both home and school settings. Over the past two decades renewed interest in the effects of story reading have emerged. Researchers representing a diverse range of disciplines including linguistics, psychology, sociology and education have utilised a variety of research techniques to produce theoretical, correlational, case study and anecdotal reports which
reinforce these practices and perceptions by describing children’s behaviour and identifying correlations between being read to and certain aspects of literacy development.

At a theoretical level Smith (1978) argues that being read to is a basic means by which children come to understand the functions and structures of written language. Clay (1979) reinforces this argument, stating that being read to is a primary means by which children begin to recognise the connections between spoken and written language.

Fox (1985) analysed the responses of 3-5 year olds with extensive story sharing backgrounds to her request to tell her a story, and concluded that their experiences with picture story books had provided a strong awareness of the rules underlying various kinds of narrative discourse, and models for the children to reconstruct their own meanings and worlds. Applebee (1978) looked at how stories are conceptualised by children across an age range, through retelling and writing, and concluded that repeated shared readings of text additionally provide children with a ‘sense of story’ and that this story schema can be used by children in understanding both conversation and print.

Evidence from correlational studies suggests that exposure to story reading in the early years is related to particular aspects of literacy learning. Durkin (1966), in her series of studies of early readers cited story reading, and the children's questions pertaining to that reading as significant factors in the ability to read. Other studies provide additional evidence that experience in being read to can be positively related to success with beginning reading in school (Durkin, 1974, 1975; Wells, 1979, 1981, 1982).
Case studies of children who have been read to frequently offer anecdotes and observations that indicate that young children who are read to frequently learn book and print conventions and exhibit what Doake (1981) refers to as reading like behaviour as they return to books independently over and over again, orchestrating aspects of their current world, language and literacy knowledge to reconstruct the text for themselves (Baghban, 1979; Holdaway, 1979; Doake, 1981). In 1985, based on such evidence the report of the Commission on Reading conducted in the United States of America concluded that

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.

(p.23)

It is only recently that research has begun to focus closely on the nature and content of the interactions that take place between participants during story reading itself. These studies can be broadly grouped as parent/child and teacher/child interactions with picture story books.

PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS DURING STORY READING
A number of studies report on how children benefit from story reading. Conducted primarily with middle class families they indicate that adults act as scaffolds for the child during story reading, adjusting the degree of support and expectations of the child over time.

Ninio and Bruner (1978) analysed mothers' dialogues that accompanied picture book reading to young children. They found that mothers direct their children's attention to particular features in a book, ask questions, provide labels, and give feedback by repeating or extending the child's remarks. Snow and Ninio (1986) analysed videotaped sessions of parents reading to their children and found that
the parents demonstrated to the children that the book was in control and the reader is led to understanding, that pictures in books represent objects and events, and that events may be real or fantasy. De Loache and De Mendoza (1986) studied joint picture book reading between mothers and 12-18 month old infants and reported significant increases over age in the mothers' requests and expectations of the child to respond, the use of elaboration in feedback, consistent connecting of story information with the child's own experiences and the use of questions in place of labels and comments. Over the age span, children became more able to respond to the mothers' questions, use verbal terms, and initiate interactions.

Sulzby (1985) studied the emergent reading attempts of 24 children at the commencement and end of kindergarten, as well as the reading attempts of two, three, and four year old children, and from a comparison of this data identified progression across age levels. Children were asked to read, or pretend to read, familiar and unfamiliar stories. The children moved in a progression from being unable to form stories, to forming stories in their own oral structures then to forming stories in written language structures. Following this, the attention focused on print, and Sulzby states that, as reading strategies were formed, independent reading began to occur. It appears from Sulzby's research that story reading constructs are formed prior to the ability to read, or even to attend to print.

Altwerger, Dichl-Faxon, and Dockstader-Anderson (1985) cite evidence from a six month study with thirty 23-29 month old children of changes in the mothers interactional strategies over the period as they moved from 'conversational text' by which the mother engaged in a
conversation about the meaning but not the form of the story, to a text more closely approximating the print. The researchers concluded that the focus was always on meaning, and that these finely tuned interactions during story sharing develop knowledge concerning text construction, that precedes and supports reading from print.

Important differences reside in the experienced language users’ responses to the children, and what they feel is of importance in the sharing. Studies by Ninio and Bruner, Snow and Ninio, DeLoache and DeMendoza show parents controlling the responses of the child by focusing narrowly on the written text and the meaning that they attribute to the text. In contrast, studies by Sulzby and Altwerger et al. show parents building links between the stories they are sharing and the child’s own experiences, with the emphasis on building meaning before focusing more closely on the written text. During text sharing, children’s meaningful approximations are accepted and risk taking encouraged.

TEACHER/CHILD INTERACTIONS DURING STORY READING

Teacher/child interactional researchers (Holdaway, 1979; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Dombey, 1989; Mills, 1989) have examined how teachers read aloud to young children and how children participate in such readings.

Holdaway detailed how the nightly ritual of a bedtime story can help the child not only to develop an interest in the content of books, but also to take possession of their language. Cochran-Smith (1984) observed picture story book readings in school and reported that such events are based on co-operative negotiation of textual meanings by
readers and listeners. To be most effective, the researcher asserts that such interactions must include life to text as well as text to life interactions. Life to text interpretation uses the child’s current knowledge to make sense of the information in the book. Interpretation from text to life demonstrates to the child the ways in which the information in the book can be related to his or her life.

In research which expands on Heath’s finding that literacy is learned early as ‘ways of taking from the culture’, Dombey (1989) reports on the interactions in a nursery classroom to show how meanings are socially created in that context when a story is read aloud to a class. Dombey describes the teacher’s strategy as ‘an interrogation of the text’, conducted out loud with invitations to the children to join in the enterprise, thus displaying how to give coherence and significance to a text and inviting them to join her as active participants. Mills (1989) explores the social nature of learning, probing some of the interpretative processes in everyday social action which connect with the kinds of understandings children bring to their early independent readings of books and concludes that real texts requiring children to make sense, and explore possible worlds are central to the process.

While each of these studies show the process as being interactive in nature, and report in detail on the children’s thinking and interaction, the focus lies on the teacher’s strategies for initially making the story sharing an open potential, and for demonstrating the process of reading to the children.
REPEATED REREADINGS OF FAVOURITE PICTURE STORY BOOKS

Children's requests to read favourite picture story books over and over again, and their independent interactions with favourite picture story books are so much a part of the taken for granted ritual of story sharing that they pass almost without comment, other than 'I can't miss a word' or 'if I try to turn over an extra page I get caught out every time'. While these comments may seem unremarkable, they are vital evidence of children's developing insights about stories.

In one of the earliest accounts of rereadings of favourite picture story books, White (1954) remarked that each rereading brought its own special response. Of Peter Rabbit, she states

My impression is that they ask different questions every time I read the book, and find something new there, much the same as I find something new every time I pick up Emma or Middlemarch.

(p.44)

While the benefits of reading stories to children has been researched in both home and school settings, the act of rereading favourite books to them has only recently been examined for its specific role in enhancing the development of literacy understandings (Sulzby, 1987; Martinez and Roser, 1985; Yaden, 1985), Sulzby adds support for White's observation reporting as one of the major findings from a three year study into parent/child interaction and children's independent functioning with preschool children that

we found that repeated readings of the same text by the same participants never came out the same way. In a sense the text itself changed over time as participants jointly became more familiar with it, as the child or children gained more worldly experience and linguistic facility, and even as the emotional or physical states of the participants changed from reading to reading

(p.65)
Martinez and Roser (1985) found that children's comments and questions increase and become more interpretive and evaluative when they have listened to repeated readings of the same story. In two case study investigations of repeated picture story book readings Snow and Goldfield (1983) found that in their comments and responses to the readings children discussed more aspects of the text, and discussed them in greater depth, elaborating and interpreting issues in the stories.

Teale and Sulzby (1984) found that with repeated readings, children internalised the interaction that occurred between parent and child, and the child gradually took over the conducting of the story reading. The child was in control of the scaffolding. Sulzby (1985) found that the familiarity that comes with repeated readings enables children to dramatise stories or attempt to read stories on their own, and that these reinactments model the parents picture story book reading.

Studies concerning repeated rereadings of favourite picture story books show the experiences to be interactive and transactive. The important difference between these and other studies of picture story book reading is the recognition that children are engaged in bringing their meaning and their strategies for making meaning to the experience. These findings lend support to my hypothesis that the study of story reading over an extended period of time could provide important insights into children's developing strategies for reading.

SOCIAL LITERACY LEARNING

Consideration of literacy development must also consider the contexts in which literacy occurs and the purposes for which it is used. Story reading is only one aspect of literacy, and the wider context that
supports this practice and which story reading in turn might support, could well offer valuable insights into the ways children create meaning.

Recently, researchers have begun to look at literacy development as a largely social phenomenon. As Anderson and Stokes (1984) state, book reading, story time, and other experiences related to books are not the only source of literate experience:

> Literacy encompasses a wide range of everyday practices, and these practices are important aspects of the knowledge people acquire about literacy.  

(p.25)

A number of ethnographic studies which encompass wider uses of literacy in their cultural and social contexts are evident in the literature (Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith, 1984; Heath, 1983; Leichter, 1984; Anderson and Stokes, 1984).

Schiefflin and Cochran-Smith (1984) show evidence of the social and cultural differences in literacy learning by contrasting the literacy needs and learning styles of three different cultural groups, a nursery school group, a Papua New Guinea people, and a Chinese immigrant family and conclude that for an individual to become literate, literacy must be functional, meaningful and relevant for the individuals and for the society in which they live. Heath (1983) in her study in the Piedmont Carolinas of two communities only a few miles apart, details the way in which parents and community members socialised their children into literacy, and identified three distinctly different patterns of socialisation, which in turn influenced their later literacy learning in school.
Ethnographic studies of families as environments for literacy learning (Leichter, 1984; Teale, 1984; Taylor, 1983) document how literacy learning threads through the daily routines of family life. Leichter notes that:

> a crucial feature of familial organisation is the fitting together of multiple, simultaneous activities, how literacy is embedded in activities other than for instruction how reading and writing are combined with other modes of communication.

(p.44)

Teale (1987) supports this statement from his research in twenty two homes into home background influences on young children’s literacy development noting that

> for the most part, reading and writing functioned not as isolated events but as components of the social activities of the persons in their homes and communities. Literacy occurred within particular socially assembled situations and the vast majority of time was engaged in, for reasons other than reading and writing, itself.

(p.184)

Taylor (1983) comments on the centrality of meaning in her study of family literacy as the children learned of print through the socially significant literate activities in which they were engaged, and how within this context their awareness of written language forms developed. She concludes

> there were no ‘empty sounds’, for the meanings of their words had immediate relevance to their everyday lives.

(p.76)

Goodman identified five roots from which children invent literacy for themselves, motivated from the awareness that written language makes sense. These roots include: print awareness in situation contexts; print awareness in connected discourse; functions and forms of writing; oral language about written language; and metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness about written language. Bissex (1984) in her case study of her son's evolution as a writer and reader, documents how children use both the print and people around them to make and test hypothesis about language and to come to an understanding about how written language works, using the same strategies for learning as they have successfully used for oral language learning. Bissex states that children in a literate society begin learning about written language long before they enter school ... from television ... cereal boxes ... road signs ... Harste et al. from their seminal research into 3-6 year olds written language knowledge note that the most salient home factor relating to literacy learning is 'availability and opportunity to engage in written language events', with children 'naturally included and involved' and further note that language users make active use of communication systems and alternative expressions of language in the search, identification and interpretation of signifying structures in order to create a unified meaning.

Cambourne (1984) has identified a number of social conditions which ensure that children successfully learn the language of their culture and proposes that these conditions are equally valid for successful written language learning. Key conditions include immersion in everyday literacy events, acceptance of learners' approximations, demonstrations of forms and functions of literacy in the context of their use by experienced language users, opportunities for literacy learners
to engage in literacy events and take responsibility for the degree of engagement, and response to learners and expectations that they will succeed from experienced language users. Smith (1984) also cites demonstration, stating:

*children are capable of understanding any use of written language that is demonstrated to them, provided that they themselves understand and share the intention of the particular manifestation of written language.*

(p. 146)

Harste, Woodward and Burke (1981, 1984) describe demonstrations as a key strategy for language learning and state that it is through encountering the demonstrations of literacy in the actions and artefacts of the event, that language learners come to perceive signifying structures involved in written language. The language learner is constantly engaged in orchestrating available demonstrations with existing knowledge to arrive at new understandings. Other key factors identified were intentionality which propels literacy learning and risk taking through which language learners explore the generative potentials of literacy.

Although research from a variety of disciplines has provided considerable insights concerning emergent literacy, these insights are fragmented, as the research is not interdisciplinary. However, despite the philosophical differences that influence both researchers' perceptions of learners and learning, and the methodology used for data collection, a number of common elements are clearly evident within and across these studies. Virtually all analyses of what occurs when parents and teachers read to and with children show that the events are socially interactive in which the actual reading of the text and the meanings produced in the reading are constructed through a
co-operative negotiation between the experienced reader and the child. Literacy events are consistently linked to or embedded within social contexts. In story sharing sessions, connections are built up between the text and the child's own experience, a survey of the pictures to build such contexts often preceding any attempt to share the print. Story language, plots and characters flow naturally into role play, art and everyday language.

In turn, social contexts generate their own literacy needs. Because these literacy needs are socially significant to the families who use them, they became socially significant to the emergent literacy learner. The focus of their attention is not on the print *per se*, but the social organisation of their everyday lives, in which the print plays a part. Eventually, the children come to use print themselves, constructing written language for themselves, for their own purposes, in inventive ways.

Repeatedly, the child is shown as an active learner, attempting to orchestrate available sign potentials with current understanding about literacy and experience, to arrive at new meanings. Despite these common elements, it is only very recently that any studies into emergent literacy have focused on the central figures, the language learners themselves, and the strategies that they use to construct meaning (Halliday 1978; Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Altwerger, 1985; Roser, 1987).

Recent research which views language processes through semiotic theory, Eco (1976), Halliday (1978), Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) provides new perspectives for examining how children learn. As discussed in Chapter One, Semiosis, the interpretation of signs, is seen
as a process through which people make sense of their worlds through their interpretation of acts and artefacts which are recognised within a particular culture. Each sign has the potential to be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the past experiences of the user both with life and literacy, and with the circumstances of use.

Halliday (1978) views language as 'one of the semiotic systems that constitute a culture'. He perceives language as a complex pattern of signs used to signal meaning in a variety of social contexts. Language use is negotiated between language users in a multiplicity of situations and meaning is the outcome of the total transaction between the language, the language users and the context of the situation. From this perspective, language learning becomes a matter of learning to recognise, interpret, and use this sign system. The members of a social group determine what are signs and what such signs are to mean, therefore language learning occurs through the interaction of the learner with members of the social group and the situations and artefacts which sign the shared meanings. From a literacy learning perspective, Harste et al. state that a semiotic view is one in which:

> the orchestration of all signifying structures from all available communication systems in the event have an integral part.

(p.208)

Woodward and Serebrin (1988) conclude from their collaborative study of a single, child-parent reading dyad that literacy is 'thinking in signs' and describe parent-child reading as a constant movement between readers and their continuous shifts among the multiple semiotic potentials.
Evidence supporting a semiotic view of literacy learning is also apparent in a number of contemporary studies of family literacy (Leichter, 1984; Heath, 1984; Anderson and Stokes, 1984). These researchers observed that literacy events functioned 'not as isolated bits of human activity, generally involving prior, simultaneously occurring, and subsequent units of action' and were 'socially assembled transactions consistently embedded within routine social actions'.

**TRANSACTION AND LITERACY LEARNING**

A semiotic perspective suggests that communication is an open system and that variation in interpretation is expected. Each act of interpretation will be unique because it involves a transaction between the individual's current mental state and the available textual clues.

The transactional theory as proposed by Rosenblatt (1978) and discussed in Chapter One argues that reading is fundamentally a negotiation of meanings between reader and writer, an event occurring in the context of time and space.

Iser (1988) further supports this theory, stating that

>a text only takes on life when it is 'realised', and that realisation is influenced by the individual disposition of the reader, who is in turn acted upon by different patterns of the text. The convergence of text and reader brings a literary piece of work into existence; it cannot be identified totally with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader. The literacy experience then, shaped by interaction of reader and text, becomes a virtual experience, one that exists only for that particular reader.

(p.9)

Iser (1988) asserts that the meaning which results from literacy transactions serves as a frame of reference for a new experience, and in turn the new experience can provide a different background for
interpreting the literacy event. Thus each is an open potential capable of influencing past and evolving texts.

**TEXT AND LITERACY LEARNING**

Reflecting semiotic theory, the view of text as object in which literacy was seen as a process of information transfer has shifted to a view of text as potential. Meaning is not seen as residing wholly in the print or illustrations but is created through interaction which involves the reader's past experiences in life and language, the purpose for reading, and the sign complex formed by print, illustration and other communication systems in relation to situational context.

Text then, becomes an event in time, representing pieces of the world which have unity and contextual appropriateness, and which represent attempts to orchestrate available signs. In other words

> texts are meaningful configurations of signs, intended to communicate. A text can be a picture, a conversation, a piece of music, a drama, a piece of writing.  
> (Siegal, 1984)

Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) argue that the search for and discovery of suspected and unsuspected connections between current evolving texts and past texts is what constitutes learning. The process of intertextuality involves the search for unity both within the evolving text, and between that evolving text and the past texts of the learner.

**INTERTEXTUALITY AND LITERACY LEARNING**

Beaugrande (1981) defines intertextuality as the process of interpreting current texts by means of previously composed texts by making various connections between them. Beaugrande's notion of intertextuality is based on his belief that texts are meaningful configurations of language

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intended to communicate. He describes intertextuality as one of the processes essential to the construction of a linguistic text.

Kristeva (1969) offers support for this assertion, defining intertextuality as

the sum of knowledge that makes it possible for texts to have meaning once we think of a text as depending on other texts that it absorbs and transforms.

(p.146)

Kristeva states that

every text is from the outset under jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it.

(p.389)

Traditionally, the concept of literacy has been confined to language, and the ability to read and write. More recently, researchers and educators have adopted a broader perspective to encompass the generation of meaning through multiple communication systems (Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Siegal, 1984; Short, 1984; Busch, 1986). Siegal (1984) argues that texts should be defined as meaningful configurations of signs intended to communicate. Hrushovksy (1979) proposes that texts can be

either objects of language or if any other material such as nature, colour in paintings, as long as they are 'semiotic', that is, interpreted as signs by 'understanders'.

(p.8)

In Hrushovsky's view we generate approximations of understanding through mediating the print setting and prior experiences or 'a network of information of the world' to create meaning.
The following example serves to illustrate an instance of intertextuality:

Sarah was surveying the illustrations in a new book "Ten in the Bed". She gazed intently at an illustration showing a toy elephant on one side of a bed, and a line of toys trying to pull the elephant through to the other side of the bed tug-of-war fashion. Pointing to each toy in turn she said "Rabbit pulled Elephant, Teddy pulled Rabbit, Hedgehog pulled Teddy, ... they pulled and pulled but they could not pull him up".

The similarity between this illustration and illustrations in a favourite book 'The Great Enormous Turnip' had acted as a sign prompting her to use the text from the known took to begin dialogue with the new book.

According to Harste (1984)

> literacy is never a glorified state one enters, but involves constant orchestration and re-orchestration of the sign complexes of literacy as contexts change and evolve.

(p.185)

Viewing picture story book reading through semiotic theory should enable the researcher to identify some of the strategies that emergent literacy learners use to make meaning through transactions between past and current texts and contexts and experienced literacy users, and to observe the role that intertextuality plays in the process of meaning making. By regarding the picture story book as a potential, not an absolute, strategies for meaning making which have been previously obscured or not regarded as important may become evident, and enable the researcher to build a grounded theory concerning the strategies that emergent literacy users develop from the experience of picture story book reading.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

An ethnographic perspective for looking at emergent literacy helps us to see children as active, significant participants in the making of meaning. We can see what children actually do know about literacy and gain many insights about how they come to know it.

(Cochran-Smith, 1984:256)

Within the framework of the theory developed in the previous chapter, this study seeks to identify the strategies that literacy learners use to negotiate meaning between other language users during repeated experiences with favourite picture story books over an extended period of time, and the links that they make between these and other life and literacy events.

In seeking an appropriate methodology for this study, the major considerations were that it would both theoretically and practically support my theoretical position and fit as naturally as possible into the daily lives of my collaborators and informants, and at the same time be rigorous and credible. For a number of reasons, a naturalistic paradigm best fitted these requirements.

From a semiotic perspective, traditional research paradigms which isolate aspects of language for investigation are inappropriate, for language must be studied in use and the study of language in use must necessarily include the context in which it occurs. In a paper that focuses on meaning in context, Mishler (1979) writes,

while the contextual groundings of the meanings of human action and language is vital to our everyday understanding
of our own and others' behaviour, the importance of context has been largely ignored by traditional research approaches ... and has led to a search for universal, context-free laws and to the use of context stripping methods.

(p.1)

He believes that this has resulted in researchers narrowing their focus to a limited range of meanings, thus the method has constrained rather than enabled the research.

The fundamental concern of semiotics is the construction of meaning, and the essential role of context in the evolution of meaning. Therefore, in order to record the dynamic nature of home and community literacy events and the social and cultural context from which they evolve, a naturalistic mode is appropriate. A basic premise of naturalistic research is that it elects to carry out research in the natural setting. Further, such a paradigm assumes that all aspects of the situation are an essential part of the picture, that realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, or be fragmented for separate study of the parts. To view literacy learning from the perspective of the learner, the researcher must be able to enter the learner's world and experience the contexts and events through and in which the learner generates literacy learning.

Lending further support to a naturalistic approach in this study is the use of 'human as instrument' whereby the researcher and other humans involved in the study are seen as the primary data gathering instruments. The research becomes both a lived in and a lived through experience for the researcher. The legitimation of tacit knowledge allows the researcher to appreciate the nuances of multiple realities which would otherwise go unacknowledged yet may provide vital information in the search for structures of signification.
Because all elements are predetermined in a traditional approach, such an approach would constrain this study, rather than support it. Unlike traditional research paradigms, naturalistic research does not provide apriori formulation of hypothesis, but instead, hypothesis are generated and revised in the course of the study, thus the guiding, substantive theory is grounded in the data. This is a similar process to the transactions that take place when a reader reads, and from the transaction between the text, the author, and real world knowledge, arrives at meaning. Just as a text is seen as an open potential, naturalistic enquiry is an open potential from which a grounded theory can emerge based on the shared understandings of the participants concerning the reality of the situation.

Although as Guba and Lincoln (1985) note, there are many opportunities in naturalistic research when quantitative methods can be appropriately utilised, quantitative measures would be totally inappropriate when meaning is seen as an open potential and the generative nature of learning is acknowledged. The qualitative methods of observation, interview and document analysis used in naturalistic research are adaptable to the multiple realities of the context and expose more directly the nature of the transaction. Moreover, qualitative methods can be adapted to fit more closely the needs of the researcher as the design of the study begins to emerge. Additionally, purposive sampling allows the use of multiple data gathering methods and sources and further enhances the possibility that the researcher will be able to identify the many interrelated layers of context that surround and support story reading.
THE STUDY

A case study format was chosen as being the most appropriate form of naturalistic enquiry for this study as it is the primary vehicle for emic enquiry.

SITE SELECTION AND ENTRY

I had known the parents who collaborated with me in this study for some time, and we had shared many conversations about their children, and in particular about things that the children were doing which related to literacy learning. Both mothers read aloud to their children on a regular basis and as they knew I lectured on children's literature and frequently conducted seminars for parents, they often instigated discussions about choosing books for their children, or about the children's responses to particular books. In turn, I often shared new books and authors that my students and I were exploring. In a sense, we were already collaborating before the study began.

Several factors guided my choice of collaborators. From our discussions both appeared open to their children's responses to the stories they shared together and their attempts to make sense of the social aspects of literacy. Because I was working from a semiotic perspective to develop a grounded theory concerning the children's strategies, I needed to ensure that my informants would be given the opportunity to make meaning through their own interpretation of what they currently understood to be significant sign systems and useful demonstrations. Shared anecdotes and information indicated that this would be the case. A further consideration was their interest and willingness to be a part of the research project as collaborators, and I
felt that their previously expressed interest in their children and books would sustain them in this.

As data was to be collected in the natural context of its use, it was essential to establish the patterns of literacy use in each household. Through informal interviews and discussion we established literacy rich events that occurred regularly. We then planned ways of data collection that would fit the contours of each subject's home context. While my primary focus was directed toward the strategies that children used to make meaning from the experience of picture story book reading, I was also aware that this practice was imbedded in overlapping, interrelated continuous literacy events which needed to be considered as part of the total context.

DATA COLLECTION

The data collection modes utilised for this study were qualitative in nature. Each mode was chosen for its appropriateness in gathering data that would support the enquiry focus in this particular context and with these particular participants. The informants were two years old at the commencement of the study, and totally unpredictable in mood or responsiveness and this added to the necessity that data gathering fit naturally into the everyday life of each family while being capable of capturing the dynamic nature of literacy learning. Measures included:

* formal and informal interviews
* audio and video taping
* diaries
* observation and participation
* collection of children's writing, drawing and other creative work
* field notes.
Informal Interviews
These were used consistently for the broad exploration of issues relating to the study and took place as my collaborators and I determined what data would be collected and how it would be collected. Informal interviews were also used in discussions concerning transcripts of tapes, diary entries, and observations and at various stages during the unfolding design as we reflected on past issues and considered new ones.

Focused Interviews
These were based on specific questions which had emerged from the data and took place largely in response to coding issues and aspects of data collection.

Audiotapes
Audiotapes provided a major source of data. These included:
* shared and independent rereadings of favourite picture story books
* retellings of stories
* shopping and eating out excursions
* car trips to child care.

These provided valuable insights into the children's developing strategies for meaning making within and across contexts.

Videotapes
Initially, videotaping was too intrusive as the nature of literacy learning and ever changing contexts of use made it impossible to set up cameras that would in time become an unremarkable feature of the children's worlds. As the children grew older, videotaping of story sharing
became possible and some videos were made which provided valuable triangulation for diary entries and audiotapes.

Diaries
A major concern of my collaborators and myself was the tendency for valuable data to emerge immediately taping stopped, or in some time or place that made it impossible to capture on tape or video. To overcome this, we decided that diaries would be kept by each parent to record any spontaneous instances of literacy use and references to literacy that they observed.

Children’s Writing and Artwork
Samples of the children’s emergent writing and their artwork was dated and filed for cross-referencing with other data.

Observation and Participation
This varied to suit the lifestyle of each informant. One informant was a family member, therefore observation and interaction were continuous and I was able to make many observations of the range of literacy events which made up her life. It was more difficult to observe the other informant in as relaxed a manner as his mother was anxious that each event be, in her eyes, successful.

Field Notes
Field notes which recorded elements of the emerging research design, the changing focus of questions, and notes from observation and discussions were kept throughout the study. These were periodically reviewed against the emerging data and data analysis.

The Research Phases
The research was conducted in four interactive phases:
The initial phase from January until March focused on field entry, establishment of collaborative roles, selection of initial data collecting modes and settings, and consideration of my tentative questions in regard to my theoretical perspective.

After several hours of discussion followed by informal then focused interviews, we developed data collection modes that suited both families and supported my emergent design. Data collection began, and I spent a full day of observation and participation with one collaborator and informant, and several shorter visits with the other. During these visits I jotted field notes and elaborated on those as soon as possible.

I met fortnightly with each collaborator to collect tapes and to share diary entries.

As tapes of the story readings were transcribed, these were then checked by my collaborators to ensure that my interpretations were accurate. This was particularly important in the early stages of data collection as my informants' oral language was still in an early stage of development and not always intelligible. It also allowed discussion concerning the immediate context of the recording and any factors that may have influenced the story reading that were not discernible on tape. These discussions further enabled the development of tacit knowledge.
During the first phase, it became evident that the diary entries and audiotape recordings were a most suitable method of data collection as they could be carried out effectively without disrupting family routines, and provided rich and mutually supportive data.

However, at times, the two year olds had 'anti-tape periods' where they became very conscious of the tape and refused to participate or just fooled around. At these times we stopped taping for some days or weeks until the informants were comfortable with taping again.

The data collected in this phase and insights from observations caused me to rethink my initial questions

(1) How do pre-schoolers negotiate meaning both with other language users in the literacy event, and within and across contexts?

(2) What social experiences provide pre-schoolers with systematic and useful sources of information about the visual features of text?

The major reasons for my shift in thinking were the realisation that 'literacy events' was too broad, and I would need to concentrate in depth on one particular literacy event within the larger context of literacy events, and that the 'visual features of text' was too narrow to take in the range of sign systems that the children were utilising in meaning making. What were emerging were not strategies for working on the visual features, per se, but wholistic strategies that encompassed every possible aspect that could contribute to meaning, of which the visual features were but a small part at this time. The most compelling finding was the determination and resourcefulness of the children as
meaning makers, and their manipulation of the experienced language learner together with an ever increasing text and world knowledge and linguistic facility to arrive at their meaning in their way. Halliday (1976) puts it succinctly as he talks of language development:

What the child does, I think, is create a language and a reality in partnership with others; they are working at it together. And it is the child who is the driving force. The mother, and other important people, do the steering - although the child always struggles to get his hand on the wheel too.

(p.7)

These young learners had a very strong grip on the wheel, and often controlled the experience.

Intertextuality, which I had seen as connections, was emerging more as a frame of reference, a part of what Woodward and Serebrin (1989) refer to as a 'semiotic data pool' as an extension of Burke's (1979) notion of the linguistic data pool.

Concurrently with my questions undergoing change and refinement, methods of data collection and data collection points had to be critically analysed also to ensure that they were capable of capturing the quintessence of the informants' emerging strategies. As the need to record responses related to visual features lessened over the need to ensure that strategies were not missed, the major data collection centred around audio tapes of story reading and responses related to story reading.

Some concerns regarding the collaborative arrangements with my co-researchers were beginning to emerge during this time. My collaboration with one informant was working well. She maintained a real concern that what we did would be a natural part of the informant's
life, and was happy to accept the data as it emerged. I was becoming concerned for my other collaborator the experience was becoming a performance that was pressuring the informant, and the collaborator. My concerns were born out by tape recordings at that time (see tape March), and I became convinced that I had to renegotiate data collection and find a way to lessen this pressure, or abandon collection.

At that time my own reading had led me to an article by Denny Taylor (1983), where she described a picture story book reading study in which she had the parents record the story reading with their children and then discussed the tape in detail with the mother to provide the contextual information. I negotiated with this collaborator that, in order to lessen the task for her, we would tape the shared bedtime story, then leave the tape running until the informant went to sleep, to catch some of his informal independent responses to stories. I also arranged to collect the tapes at two or three weekly intervals, transcribe them, then meet with her to share the transcriptions and diary entries. This meant that I would not be a regular participant observer in the home setting, but could continue to obtain natural data.

The second phase of research continued from April to March of the next year. This was the time of more focused observation and data collection on the major questions, as the design took shape and categories began to emerge.

The data collection methods that had been arranged to reduce the pressure on one of my informants proved to be successful, and tapes of his independent revisitings of picture story books began to provide some triangulation with his mother’s diary entries, and more evidence of his own strategies for meaning making. Additionally, on several
occasions we ran the tape in the car on the way to and from childcare when he often talked about books, read aloud, made up stories and language games, retold stories and talked about environmental print that he noticed. These too supported other tape recordings and his mother’s diary entries and gave insights into his use of intertextuality.

It became clear that he regarded texts as open potentials. He frequently used well known stories as a frame for an improvisation, or borrowed some literary language to reflect on an experience, or moved to another sign system such as drama or leggo for a re-enactment. Known features of environmental print such as colour and shape were used as a sign in the interpretation of new print, and similar sounding language rhythm substituted in place of another.

As this informant did not repeatedly return to favourite picture story books with his mother but relied heavily on word perfect memorisation, it was proving difficult to perceive consistent patterns of his strategies. Her efforts to get him to return to stories were frustrating for both of them, so we decided to tape the first sharing of several books and the subsequent one or two rereadings of these, and then to rely on fate that we might get an independent rereading or retelling on tape either after his bedtime story or in the car. This worked well, and a consistent pattern of strategies began to emerge from the data. During this time he became enormously interested in print, and story language and concepts also became even more evident in his everyday language and actions. As a means of further triangulation, I again spent a full day with them and they visited my home. This totally informal approach enabled me to observe, take field notes, and generally triangulate the data. Frequent visits would have been out of the question during this
time, as my collaborator's time away from work was heavily committed to a family member suffering ill health. However, she welcomed the continued sharing of tapes, transcriptions and diary entries, and we met at least every three weeks from April to December.

From late December to February the family visited relatives in Denmark and we ceased formal data collection. We met in March and taped an informal interview about his response to the experience, and in particular his strategies with oral and written language.

During this second phase, my other informant firmly established a set of favourite books and these became as much a part of her being as any other regular feature of her life. Although she returned to these books on countless occasions, each rereading was always in some way different as she brought new knowledge and growing linguistic facility to the task. Smith (1982) suggests that a variety of process information is simultaneously demonstrated in any literacy event, and it is important to understand that the information is not content information per se, but process, or strategic information. Harste (1984) builds on Smith's notion, asserting that

because literacy is an event rather than an act, a 'perpetual firstness' (Pierce, 1931) is assured for the young as well as the more seasoned learner.

(p.184)

This firstness is evident in Sarah's rereadings. Clearly she regarded her books as open potentials, supporting the semiotic perspective that

every sign has the potential of being interpreted in a variety of ways but it is the circumstance of its use in the social world which determines the meaning which is actualised.

(Siegel, 1984)
In the latter part of this phase, intertextuality became very evident in her everyday living. Language and concepts from books were used as frames of reference for other experiences, and role play and dramatisation of books became part of her life.

During this phase, a set of strategies were identified that were common to both children and continuous sifting of the data produced growing evidence of their use.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis occurred throughout each of the research phases. Interviews and discussions with my collaborators concerning diary entries, transcripts and observations helped me to identify emerging patterns of strategies and to recognise some intertextual links which were not overt. This, in turn, generated tentative hypothesis which led to more focused data collection.

Data was continually examined for evidence of emerging and recurrent strategies and instances of support for these strategies, and for the identification of intertextual links.

The initial unitising was carried out on card indexes but as the categories began to emerge, I found I needed an overview system that allowed me to plot relationships and view the 'big picture'. Working on A3 sheets, for each category I drew up the following information from the indexes:

(a) collaborator A's picture story book reading strategies;
(b) collaborator B's picture story book reading strategies;
(c) informant A's picture story book reading strategies;
(d) informant B's picture story book reading strategies;
informant A's use of intertextuality;
informant B's use of intertextuality;
informant A's use of signs as potentials;
informant B's use of signs as potentials.

Several examples showing consistent use of strategies were listed under each entry for categories A to D and these were added to continuously.

Category C: Informant A’s picture story book reading strategies.
Strategy: Taking ownership of language.
Text: Rosie’s Walk  Informant ‘A’  Mother ‘M’
Text: A double page spread of the fox going under the beehives.

A. Through the beehives
M. Oh! she didn’t go through the beehives
A. Across the beehives
M. No! she didn’t go across the beehives
A. Um. upon them
M. No! you’re teasing me
A. You tell me then ...

Category D: Informant B’s picture story book reading strategies
Strategy: Taking ownership of language.
Text: The Very Hungry Caterpillar  Informant ‘B’  Mother ‘M’
Text: A double page spread of different foods.

B. Chocolate cake, chocolate cake, chocolate cake, chocolate cake
M. Oh! all chocolate cake?
B. Yeh.
M. Oh. do you think so?
B. No! (laughs) ice-cream, cheese, pickle, salami ...

For selections E and F I used the title of the text as an organiser, and generated a number of categories of use based on the kinds of intertextual links with other sign systems that occurred in the data.

Table 2: Data Analysis of Intertextuality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERTEXTUALITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEXT: THE GREAT BIG ENORMOUS TURNIP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links with Life</th>
<th>Links with other books</th>
<th>Links with art</th>
<th>Links with drama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'We both like old man in turnip book' as she and her father put on jeans and braces.</td>
<td>Reading '10 in the bed' 'Like turnip book' uses language pattern of 'Turnip'.</td>
<td>Draws huge scribble 'That turnip. Now we eats him all up'.</td>
<td>pretends to eat turnip picture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'We pull and pull but we couldn't pull it up' as she and her mother pull weeds from a garden.</td>
<td>Hedgehog pulled Rabbit, Rabbit pulled Teddy ... to access the new text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data related to categories G and H, which identified the use of sign systems and the constructive role of the informants as meaning makers, were colour coded in the diaries and transcripts.

Category G: Informant A's use of sign systems.
Context: Leif and Mother in car travelling to child care.
L. There's a Popper truck.
M. Where?
L. There. In front of us.
M. That's the milkman.
L. It's a Popper truck.
M. No it isn't. See the milk sign on it?
L. Well they look like Poppers on the back.
M. They do, but they're milk drinks in packets like Poppers.
L. Mmm.

Category H: Informant B's use of sign systems.
Context: A shopping centre. Sarah is sitting in the shopping trolley pointing out items that she knows.
S. Dere's Coke's num nums. (Points to the brand of cat food eaten by her Nanna's cat.)
N. Good girl. What else can you see?
S. Dogs num nums. Num, num, nummy. (Points to brand of dog food eaten by pet dogs.)
Later that day she is watching T.V. and sees an advertisement for another cat food.
S. No Coke num nums. Coke has other one num nums.
Each of the entries on overviews and in diaries and transcripts were dated, and also referenced with the tape code and relevant numbers to permit easy access. Data collected in the categories ‘A’ and ‘B’ concerning the collaborator’s picture story book reading strategies were used in conjunction with categories ‘C’ and ‘D’ to investigate the degree to which the informants utilised the strategies that were demonstrated, and the ways in which they acted on those demonstrations to formulate strategies of their own.

DETERMINING CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

While methods of ensuring the validity, reliability and objectivity utilised in experimental research are inappropriate to the naturalistic paradigm, there can be no doubt that trustworthiness is of paramount importance to the naturalist’s researcher.

In the final analysis, the study is for naught if its trustworthiness is questionable.

(p.287)

To maximise the credibility and trustworthiness of my data, my interpretations of those data, and my conclusions, I have been mindful throughout this study of the methods of ensuring trustworthiness and credibility outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Throughout the continuous rethinking, reshaping and reflection that guided this naturalistic study, ensuring trustworthiness has been of the utmost concern.

Lincoln and Guba state that three activities, prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation increase the probability that credible findings will be produced. Each of these activities has been built into the research.
Prolonged Engagement

As 'objects and behaviours take not only their meaning but their very existence from their contexts', it is crucial that the naturalist spend enough time to become oriented to the situation and to build trust and rapport with the respondents. Time is also necessary for the naturalist to take account of distortions that can occur due to their presence.

When data collection ceased, I had fifteen months and thirty months respectively of continuous involvement with my informants. The prolonged period of engagement allowed me to build up trust, and to record, have recorded, and participate in innumerable literacy and life events in the lives of my informants and collaborators.

Persistent Observation

By focusing on the particular literacy events of repeated rereadings of favourite picture story books, within the wider context of family and community literacy over such a prolonged period, it has been possible to identify emerging patterns of strategies, how these strategies were utilised in and across contexts, and the intertextual links that children made between experiences.

Triangulation

The technique of triangulation (Denzin, 1978) further improves the probability that findings and interpretations will be founded credible. Triangulation is directed at a judgement of the accuracy of specific data items. Three modes of triangulation are incorporated into this study.

Different Data Collection Modes

* diaries of literacy events kept by parents
* audiotapes of favourite shared stories
* audiotapes of regular family activities which include literacy
* informants' writing and drawing.

Each data collection mode provides credibility for the other. Responses to favourite stories emerge in the informants' writing and drawing, and throughout retellings and language and literacy exploration and experimentation recorded in the diaries. Many of these responses occur months apart as children bring some aspect of language from a story or excursion to a literacy experience they are currently negotiating.

**Multiple and Different Sources**

* informants' interactions with picture story books
* informants' interactions with other literacy related events
* informants' interactions with others in the context
* informants' interactions with writing and drawing.

The range of sources from which data is collected provide a different source for the same information. For example, an informant remembers some aspect of a favourite story, then draws about that story and tries to write the remembered part of the story; an informant uses literacy language to initiate some everyday literacy event; an informant generalises some aspect of a known story as a way of interpreting a new story.

**Different Investigators**

Parents and researcher working as a team in a collaborative mode, add to the probability that findings will be credible. Guba and Lincoln (1985) state that member checks, whereby data, analytic categories,
interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. This technique, which is directed at a judgement of overall credibility, became a cause of concern as the age of my informants rendered it impossible. However, as member checks seek to determine if reconstructions are adequate representations of realities, and the collaborating parents are a part of that reality, member checks have been constantly carried out with them. All data is continuously shared, transcripts of audiotapes are checked re transcription and details of the part played by context, the informants’ purposes, and the purposes of other participants in literacy events is discussed.
CHAPTER FOUR

EMERGENT LITERACY LEARNERS' TRANSACTIONS WITH SOCIAL LITERACY AND FAVOURITE PICTURE STORY BOOKS

All thought ... must necessarily be in signs. Whenever we think we have present to consciousness some feeling, image, conception, or other representation, which serves as a sign.

(Peirce, 1932, cited in Innes, 1985:283)

INTRODUCTION

As stated earlier, the aim of this study is to identify the strategies emergent literacy learners use to negotiate meaning between other language users and texts during repeated experiences with favourite picture story books over an extended period of time and the intertextual links that learners make between past and current experiences with favourite picture story books and other literacy and life experiences. The focus of this study is on literacy learning from the perspective of the child and the development of a grounded theory concerning the development of strategies for meaning making from the experience of shared and independent rereadings of favourite books.

As the data were reduced and reorganised using the analytic procedures described in the previous chapters, a number of key sets of meaning making strategies emerged. These strategies can be broadly grouped as:

* strategies for initiating engagement
* strategies for sustaining and deepening engagement
* strategies for taking ownership of the content and process
strategies for connecting past and current literacy, language and world experiences.

Although the evolution of these strategies is specifically related to the informants' transactions with picture story books, consideration must be given to the networks of home and community literacy experiences in which the practice of picture story book reading is embedded. From a semiotic perspective, language must be studied in use and this necessarily encompasses the contexts in which it occurs, in this case the homes and communities of these young learners.

**Definition of Analytic Terms**

Throughout this study, the informants' transactions with literacy are described as literacy events. The concept 'literacy event' is used in this study to mean 'one in which written materials are integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes' (Heath, 1978:75). The term 'event' highlights the dynamic nature and the open potential for meaning making of these experiences. Derived from the speech event (Hymes, 1974) the language event centres on the focus determined by the learner.

**CONSIDERING THE WIDER SOCIAL LITERACY LEARNING CONTEXT**

The picture story book reading that became the major focus of this naturalistic study is only one of many literacy events that regularly take place in the everyday lives of my informants. For these children the symbols and artefacts for using microwave ovens, dishwashers, video machines, telephones and television, are as much a part of their potential sign system for literacy learning as books, letters, notes, postcards, magazines, pens and pencils. All of these are used in their
homes, providing countless demonstrations of the ways in which literacy serves useful purposes. Shopping, banking, eating out and other routine literacy orientated family events provide further demonstrations for the language learner, potentials for them to observe and explore, and frames of reference to transfer to other literacy events. Therefore, prior to any discussion of the specific meaning making strategies that the emergent literacy learners develop from the experiences of shared and independent story reading it is important to consider these other literacy events which regularly surround this practice, in which the informants have other transactions with written language in a variety of self and family initiated circumstances.

Consideration of the informants’ immersion and engagement in the social literacy use of home and community, provides a wider perspective for describing, analysing and understanding how each informant observed, was involved in and acted on a variety of literacy events. This provides valuable insights concerning the expectations they have of written language as well as their experiences in its use, and the relationships they perceive between and across literacy and life experiences. It also provides insights into the informants’ use of signs as potentials for meaning making, what these signs are and how they are utilised in the quest for understanding. Together, this information provides essential knowledge of the social contexts within which the development of strategies for meaning making from the experience of picture story book reading emerge. Figure 3 shows how this relationship is represented schematically.
**WITHIN THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**

The learner brings to each experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOCIAL LITERACY EVENTS and PICTURE STORY BOOK READING EVENTS as OPEN POTENTIALS FOR MEANING MAKING

The learner acts on and regards SOCIAL LITERACY EVENTS: DEMONSTRATIONS OF TEXT IN CONTEXT and PICTURE STORY BOOK READING: DEMONSTRATIONS OF TEXT AS CONTEXT

The learner acts on and in transactions with the acts, artefacts and experienced literacy users develops:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies for initiating engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* requesting demonstrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* confirming the story during the reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* interacting with the language of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* focusing on an aspect of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* focusing on an aspect of illustration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies for sustaining and deepening involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* joining in self-selected parts of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* taking over selected parts of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* combining story language and oral language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* life to text connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* searching for significant patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* telling story from illustrations in story language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies for taking ownership of content and process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* taking ownership of the experienced reader’s role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* taking ownership of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* taking ownership of story characters and story language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* moving to another communication system</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies for using intertextuality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* links with other books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* links between books and life experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* links with other communication systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.** Developing meaning making strategies from shared and independent picture story book reading: A socio-semiotic perspective.

(Parkes, 1990)
DEMONSTRATIONS OF LITERACY USE IN HOME AND COMMUNITY SETTINGS

As described in Chapter Two, demonstrations are a key element in literacy learning. The following discussion centres on the multiplicity of contexts and related literacy events that take place in the daily lives of the two informants providing repeated demonstrations of purposeful, meaningful literacy use, and the ways the informants act on these demonstrations and incorporate them into their own activities for their own purposes.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

For the two informants in this study the events which exemplify this discussion occurred in many ways in many contexts. In each instance the children put the literacy artefacts and events to their own use as they filled out bank forms, acted on traffic signs, consulted indexes, telephone books and newspapers for information, responded to junk mail and letters and held imaginary telephone conversations. The following extracts from the data illustrate this focus.

ACTING ON HOME AND COMMUNITY LITERACY DEMONSTRATIONS

Informant A

Sample One

Context: A shopping centre where Leif sees a sign on his favourite weighing machine.

L. What's that sign say?
M. It says "out of order".
L. What does it mean?
M. It means it's not working.
L. Out of order - mmm.

A few days later Leif is playing with some toys and asks, "What does out of order begin with?"

M. "O for out. See". (The Mother writes it all for him, discussing each letter as she writes.)

L. "I'm going to make out of order signs".

He makes some signs and sticks them around the house as part of his game. For the next week 'out of order' signs, carefully copied, appear in all kinds of places around the house.

Sample Two

Context: Walking to a shop across the road from Leif's home.

For some weeks Leif has been 'reading' road signs that he recognises on outings and asking about ones that he does not know. There is a 'children crossing' sign near his house and he has decided that's where he and his parents must cross the road.

L. Let's go up to the sign. I want to see what's on it.

M. We looked at it yesterday. It has a picture of children crossing the road on it.

L. Why?

M. So the drivers will know that there are children about and be extra careful.

L. Well, this is where we have to cross too.

Sample Three

Context: In bedroom, Leif is looking at "The Play-school Useful Book".

60
He and his Mother often share this book together to share songs and poems and a copy is also used at his child-care centre.

L. Where is the Play-school song?
M. I don’t know.
L. We’ll have to look in the index for it. It’s at the back. (He consults the index as if he can read it, then opens the book at random.)
L. (Looking at music in the book.) That’s a song. That’s the way you write a song so you can get the music out.

Sample Four

Context: At home in sunroom.

Leif’s parents are reading the Sunday papers and Leif gets himself a section of the paper and joins them.

F. What are you reading Leif?
L. I’m just finding out what’s on. (He proceeds to suggest several outings they might go on.)

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Sample One

From a chance encounter with an OUT OF ORDER sign, Leif is able to add a further purposeful dimension to his later role play by using a written sign in his game. Not only does the literacy event provide him with a function for environmental print in his play and new language with which to express something, but it also provides a demonstration of writing which includes letter formation and appropriate formatting for such a sign as his Mother writes it for him. From the first encounter, Leif has found out the function of the sign and in using it, has gained a further demonstration of its form from an experienced writer.
Sample Two

From his many discussions concerning road signs and their forms and functions, he knows that they are something to be acted on. When the opportunity comes for him to meaningfully incorporate a road sign into his own routines, he immediately seizes upon it.

Samples Three and Four

In both home situation examples, his interactions with the newspaper and the song book show that from repeated demonstrations he has worked out the functions of each one and has some knowledge of the content and purpose. His parents frequently consult the newspaper and discuss "what's on" as they consider the options for an outing, and song books are a regular feature of his child care program and home life where he has watched as the index has been consulted before turning to the page to play or sing the song, or in his words 'to get the music out'.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Informant B

Sample One

Context: At the bank.

Sarah and her Mother go to the bank. As the Mother fills in her bank slips Sarah climbs up onto a chair, picks up a bank slip and a pen and carefully 'writes'.

Her Mother goes to the counter and Sarah picks up her bank slip and puts it up on the counter saying, "Get money plis".

Later that day, Sarah is busy with her crayons and paper.

M. "What are you doing, Sarah?"
S. I writing.
M. Oh.
S. I do bank writing.

Sample Two

Context: Nanna’s house in family room.

Sarah’s Father composes and plays music and often sings and plays with her. Sarah is visiting her grandparents, and collects the mail from the letterbox which includes a church newsletter re Carols by Candlelight with words and music and an airmail letter.

S. Look Nanna. (She gives Nanna the newsletter first.) It’s a ‘la la la la’ letter. (Sings a little tune and points to the music.)

N. How do you know that, Sarah?
S. Daddy and Sarah sing sing.

She then hands over the airmail letter.

S. A Daddy letter.
N. Oh. It’s airmail like when Daddy writes.
S. Yeh.
N. It looks the same doesn’t it. It’s from old Nanna who lives a long way away.

Sample Three

Context: Nanna’s house at bedside telephone.

Sarah opens the phone book and carefully examines a few pages. She closes the phone book and dials some numbers and waits expectantly for someone to talk to her. When there is no response, she replaces the handset. A week later she repeats the exercise but this time holds an imaginary conversation with her Aunt of bursts of unintelligible
dialogue followed by silence, just as the give and take of a real telephone conversation would sound. She then scribbles on the note pad beside the phone, tears off the paper, and takes the 'message' to her Nanna. 'Caron say see you soon Nanna'.

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Sample One
Visiting the bank with her Mother is a regular routine for Sarah. From this experience she has not only discovered what artefacts are used in this context and why, but has noticed the kind of writing that is used in this transaction. Her 'bank writing' is continuous as opposed to her usual writing.

Sample Two
Sarah's response to her Nanna's mail shows that she is able to take experience from one literacy situation, the music she shares with her Father, and use it to bring meaning to a similar literacy artefact in
another situation. Airmail letters are of special significance in her life as they are the family's means of communication during her Father's absences. To Sarah, her expectation of all airmail letters are connected to this experience. In both examples she uses the strategy of life to text to interpret the experience for herself.

**Sample Three**

From frequent demonstrations of telephone conversations, Sarah recognises the essential artefacts for that literacy event and the way in which they are used and has attempted to put them into use for herself. A week later she has added appropriate dialogue and turn taking, and because she is at her Nanna's place where she had seen many instances of phone messages being written, she adds this to her role play in this context.

Smith (1982) suggests that the opportunity to observe demonstrations is a necessary condition for learning. He writes:

> The first essential constituent of learning is the opportunity to see what can be done and how. Such opportunities may be termed demonstrations because they literally show a potential learner 'This is how something is done'. The world continually provides demonstrations, through people and through their products, by arts and artefacts.

(p.101).

Literacy events are their own experience and provide learners with demonstrations and experiences that they can use in more fully expanding and exploring their worlds. In each of the cited events the children are sensitive to the context of situation and the literacy artefacts that are used and how and why they are used in that situation, and attempt to use them for themselves in meaningful ways and to interpret them in light of personal experience. The children's agenda is
always on making sense of the experience for themselves. On each occasion they interact with an experienced language user to obtain responses to their efforts or to subtly request further demonstrations of use. The social nature of each event provides continuous support for their efforts.

In none of the cited events has anyone deliberately set out to teach these children. Rather, the children informally take what they regard as useful demonstrations of literacy and incorporate them into their play for their own purposes. The acts and artefacts are seen as potentials to be acted upon in certain ways in certain circumstances for the generation of meaning.

DEMONSTRATIONS OF PICTURE STORY BOOK READING
The focus of this discussion concerns the demonstrations of the processes of reading that the experienced reader provides in reading to and with the informants. As well as providing demonstrations of book and print conventions and the pleasure that picture story books can provide, the experienced reader is simultaneously a reader and a mediator, referring to shared life and literacy experiences to infuse the story with meaning, demonstrating ways of thinking like a reader, pointing out features of print and illustration, and responding to the informants' attempts to engage in the sharing.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY
The extracts from the data which exemplify this discussion show the informants acting on demonstrations of reading in a variety of ways. Frequently they use the demonstrations to listen intently to the whole story before requesting a repeated reading during which they interact. Their interactions include risk taking within the framework of the story,
predicting, inferencing, experimenting with rhyming words, questioning and testing the relationship between the stories and real life experiences. While clearly responding to demonstrations provided by the experienced reader, each informant also instigates demonstrations that further their own chosen focus at that time.

ACTING ON DEMONSTRATIONS OF PICTURE STORY BOOK READING

Informant A

Sample One

Text: Rosie's Walk.

M. Do you know what that says? (Points to the title which is set in an illustrated overview of the background to the whole story.)
L. Rosie went for a walk.
M. No, it says Rosie's Walk.
L. Yes. (Point to farm shed.) I can see a farm shed and I've got a rope like that.
M. Oh, so you have. We were just using that rope weren't we. Anything else you can see?
L. The pond ...
M. Where's Rosie's house?
L. Just there.
M. Mmm.
L. Think she's in there?

Sample Two

Text: Rosie's Walk.

M. No that says, Rosie the Hen.
L. Went for a walk.
M. Yes. Do you know what that says?
L. Past ... What does that?
M. No. That says across the yard.
L. Across the yard.
M. Mmm. What's that on the ground?
L. A rake. He's going to jump on it.
M. Yes. Somebody must have been silly and left that there. That's a dangerous place to leave a rake isn't it?
L. Mmm.
M. You never leave the rake lying on the ground like that, it can cause accidents.
L. GONG.
M. There's an accident for the fox isn't it.
L. He went GONG.
M. Yes, right on his nose.
L. Mmm.
M. Right, now where's Rosie going?
L. Around the pond pond, pond wand.
M. Pond wand (laughs).
L. Pond wand.
M. (Laughs) What's sitting on top of the tree there?

Sample Three

Text: Rosie's Walk.

M. What's happened to the fox?
L. (Laughs) Look!
M. Mmm.
L. Oh ... But, what's that window for?
M. Oh that’s probably so they can see inside the mill. You think so?

L. Mmm.

M. She went through the fence ... and where’s the fox going? He’s not going through the fence, he’s going..

L. Over..

M. Oh, and look where he’s landed.

L. Where’s the trolley going?

M. Where do you think?

L. RRRRR - Plonk!

M. Oh dear.

L. It hurt.

M. It might, let’s see. Did it? While Rosie went under the beehive, what did the fox do?

L. Bang! Splatter!

M. Bang! Splatter! What?

L. Bang went the fox.

M. What’s happening now?

**Sample Four**

**Text: Real Friends.**

M. OK. You’re going to read this one to me. That’s nice.

L. Can you see what it says up there? (Points to title.)

M. No. What does it say?

L. Real Friends.

M. Oh. Right.

L. That says real down there. That says friends.

M. Oh. Right.

L. But what’s that little one?
M. I think it's a duck.
L. But is it a boy or a girl?
M. I don't know.
L. It's a girl and that one ..
M. How do you know it's a girl?
L. Because it's got spotted pants.
M. Oh.
L. And that one's a boy.
M. How do you know that?
L. Because he's got blue pants on.
M. Oh. ...
M. I thought you were going to read this to me. You tell me the story.
L. But you have to read the words that I don't know.
M. Well you tell me what you think's happening and I'll tell you whether or not.

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Sample One

Leif's Mother demonstrates that the print on the cover provides the name of the story. Leif, however, has begun to look at the illustrations and finds a picture that he relates to real life. His Mother responds to his agenda and uses the overview page to establish a context for the story.

Sample Two

Again Leif's Mother demonstrates the use of print and then proceeds to go into a lengthy exposition concerning safety. Leif shows that he wants to go on with the story, and effectively uses sound effects to move the
sharing on. The Mother continues to provide meaning making strategies by thinking aloud about the sequence of the story and involving Leif in the thinking.

Sample Three
His Mother continues to demonstrate that reading is a thinking process and Leif begins to initiate some questions of his own about features of the illustration.

Sample Four
Leif prepares to read a book to his Mother and uses some of the strategies that have been previously demonstrated to him for getting meaning from both print and illustrations as he surveys the title and the illustrations on the cover. He then negotiates what demonstrations he will need, 'But you have to read the words that I don't know'.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY
Informant B
Sample One
Text: The Very Hungry Caterpillar.
M. One Sunday morning.
S. Yeh.
M. The warm sun came up and POP, out of the egg came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar.
S. Yeh.
M. He started to look for some food. On Monday he ate one apple.
S. Mmm.
M. But he was still hungry.
S. Yeh.
**Sample Two**

**Text: Rosie's Walk.**

S. This is Rosie's Walk. The hen walks..

M. The hen walks does it?

S. Yeh.

M. OK. You going to come round here and read it to Mummy?

S. Yeh.

M. Come on then, hop on my knee.

S. OK.

M. OK. Here we go. Right. Rosie's Walk. (Points to title.)

S. Rosie's Walk.

M. Mmm.

S. Rosie went the yard.

M. She went where?

S. Rosie went that. Rosie went the yard.

M. She went for a walk.

S. Ye, she went walking the yard.

M. Walking along.

S. Yeh.

M. Oh, there she is getting ready to leave.

S. Yeh.

M. Rosie the hen went for a walk.

S. Yeh.

M. Mmm. What's this?

S. And there's a fox chasing.

M. Chasing her is it?

S. Yeh.
M. Oh, what do you think he might do if he catches her?
S. Him's going to eat.
M. He's going to eat her up.
S. Yeh.
M. Yeh. OK. Across the yard. Oooh.
S. Chasing her the fox.
M. Chasing her the fox is he?
S. Mmm.
M. Oh, look what happened to the fox.

Sample Three

Text: Baby Dear.

S. She's crying.
M. Is she?
S. Crying.
M. Why?
S. Crying.
M. Why is she crying? Why? Why is she crying?
S. Bed.
M. Because she's in bed. Oh. (Begins to read.) Baby Dear is my brand new baby doll ... 

Sample Four

Text: Rosie's Walk

D. Around the pond.
S. Yeh.
D. What's happened to the fox?
S. He's going splash.
D. Swimming.
S. Yeh. And that's going splash and
D. Oh look the birds flown away.
S. Yeh.
D. Bye bye bird.
S. Oh.
D. What's that?
S. And there's a goat.
D. And where's the fox?
S. And here is.
D. And what are they?
S. And there's ... I don't know.
D. They're mice.
S. Mmm.
D. Little mice.
S. And there's over haycock.
D. Good girl, over the haycock yeh. Oh, the fox is in the hay.
S. Yeh.
D. And what's he doing?

Sample Five

Text: The Very Hungry Caterpillar.

M. In the light of the moon.
S. Yeh.
M. A little egg.
S. Lay leaf.
M. Yeh. And here it is, look! A little egg lying on a leaf.
S. Yeh.
M. One Sunday morning the warm sun came up and ...
S. POP! Tiny hungry caterpillar.
M. Yeh.
S. Tiny caterpillar.
M. Tiny hungry caterpillar. He started to look ...
S. Look food.
M. Looking for food.
S. Yeh.
M. On Monday he ate through
S. When it was caterpillar time for dinner
M. Pardon?
S. Look food!
M. Oh. It was time for dinner was it?

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Sample One
In this sample Sarah’s Mother reads through the whole story, demonstrating aspects of the form and content of a picture story book and the process of reading. Sarah responds to the demonstration with a soft ‘yeh’ at intervals throughout the story to signal her engagement in the experience while using the demonstration to enjoy and silently attend to the story.

Sample Two
Sarah initiates a demonstration of ‘Rosie’s Walk’ by beginning the story and involving her Mother in the reading. The Mother encourages her efforts and demonstrates the sequence of the story and ways of thinking about the story which enable Sarah to carry on bringing meaning to the text. Subtly too, the Mother is demonstrating that she believes that
Sarah herself is a reader, giving Sarah the confidence to risk take as she supports and extends her approximations.

**Sample Three**

Sarah's Mother demonstrates that reading is a thinking process by encouraging Sarah to transact with a text. Sarah's response uses life to text experience as she responds that the baby is crying because it is in bed, as their new baby cries when it is put to bed.

**Sample Four**

Sarah's Father continues to demonstrate reading as a thinking process as he involves her in interaction with the sequence of the story and the meaning, demonstrating language and thinking, and responding positively to her efforts as well as gently extending them.

**Sample Five**

Utilising previous demonstrations of continuously interpreting texts through inferencing, Sarah adds the information that it must be the caterpillar's time for dinner as he was looking for food.

Just as social literacy learning develops through the informants' involvement in continuous meaningful demonstrations of literacy use, picture story book reading is a further demonstration of literacy use in the informants' lives. As well as providing demonstrations of the conventions of books and print, and the enjoyment that can be derived from the experience of sharing books, the experienced reader continually provides demonstrations of the actual process of reading and the use of meaning making strategies and engages the learner in these. As in social literacy learning, the learners select which aspects
of demonstrations they will utilise, how they will utilise them and what further demonstrations they require.

SOCIAL LITERACY LEARNING AS AN OPEN POTENTIAL
As the theoretical framework of this study incorporates a semiotic perspective, consideration of the ways in which the informants use what they see to be significant signs to interpret literacy acts and artefacts provides essential background information to recognising and understanding the informants' attempts at meaning making and their developing strategies for doing so.

This discussion centres on the constructive role of the informants as meaning makers and exemplifies the use of what they see to be signifying structures from all available communication systems to make sense of home and community literacy experiences.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY
Each informant continuously monitored the contexts in which literacy events occurred and the acts and artefacts within the literacy events for significant signs. Colour, shape, illustration, print, and language were all used in relation to context as the informants hypothesised about the contents of service vehicles, the meaning and use of recipe cards, and differentiated between brands of pet foods.

Informant A

Sample One

Context: Leif and Mother in car travelling to child care.

L. There's a Popper truck.

M. Where?

L. There. In front of us.
M. That's the milkman.
L. It's a Popper truck.
M. No it isn't. See the milk sign on it?
L. Well they look like Poppers on the back.
M. They do, but they're milk drinks in packets like Poppers.
L. Mmm.

Sample Two
Context: In car on the way to the shops with Father. Leif spots an I.P.E.C. truck and instigates a discussion about it.
L. There's a Coco-Pops truck.
F. How do you know?
L. I don't know. I just do.
F. It isn't a Coco-Pops truck. It's the same colours as the Coco-Pops packet but the letters say I.P.E.C. It's a truck that carries parcels.

Sample Three
Context: In the car on the way to child care some days later.
L. There's an I.P.E.C. truck.
M. Yes, it is.
L. It's like Coco-Pops colour, but it says I.P.E.C. (spells out the letters).
M. Who told you that?
L. Dad did.

Sample Four
Context: On the way to child care the next day, Leif sees another similar truck.
L. There's a truck. It's like an I.P.E.C. truck but it's different letters. What does it say Mum?

M. It's a Hertz rent-a-truck. You can pay some money and borrow it.

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Sample One

Leif sees the pictures of small milk drinks on the back of the milk truck and as they look similar in size and shape, he predicts that they are a type of his favourite drink, Popper juice. Size and shape act as the initial signifying feature, as well as the vehicle.

Sample Two

This time Leif uses colour as his signifying feature and rationalises that this is a Coco-Pops truck. Recognising Leif's meaning making strategy, his Father shows him that the letters are another potential signifying feature.

Sample Three

Leif sees another I.P.E.C. truck and is able to identify it. He tells his Mother how he can recognise it, and what makes it different from a Coco-Pops truck, utilising print as a differentiating feature.

Sample Four

From his earlier experiences Leif realises that print is an important sign in our culture and is using the experienced language user to initially interpret it for him. Starting from his original meaning making strategy of shape and size as a sign potential for finding out what each truck is carrying, he continuously incorporates further sign potentials through the experienced language user's responses to his hypotheses.
DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Informant B

Sample One

Context: Sarah's home.

Sarah is sitting on the lounge in the living room and her Mother and Aunt are in the kitchen washing up after doing some baking. Sarah is out of sight but they can hear her carrying out a monologue punctuated by 'num nums', then silence, then a repeat. On investigation, Sarah has taken her Mother's box of illustrated recipe cards, which are all the same size, and is giving each one of them a fairly equal amount of monologue and num nums.

M. What are you doing Sarah?
S. Sarah read. Sarah read num nums.
M. Oh. That's a nice one Sarah. That's a nice num num.
S. Sarah like dis one num num.

They look through several more cards together and discuss the foods, in Sarah's words the 'num nums' that are illustrated on each one.

Context: A shopping centre. Sarah is sitting in the shopping trolley pointing out items that she knows.

S. Dere's Coke's num nums. (Points to the brand of cat food eaten by her Nanna's cat.)
N. Good girl. What else can you see?
S. Dogs num nums. Num, num, nummy. (Points to brand of dog food eaten by pet dogs.)

Later that day she is watching T.V. and sees an advertisement for another cat food.

S. No Coke num nums. Coke has other one num nums.
INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Sample One
Sarah has been an onlooker and participant during the baking situation shown in this example and has self-selected a part of the experience that she wants to attend to further. The recipe card, together with the discussions that she has listened to as her Mother and Aunt selected a recipe, has acted as a sign for the monologue, and although her language is not sufficiently developed for her to articulate intelligible words, the length of the continuous vocalising, dispersed with her 'discussion' concerning the 'num nums' in the illustrations, leaves no doubt in the minds of her listeners as to her purpose. Her Mother's positive response to her efforts confirms for her that her interpretation of the literacy event is meaningful.

Sample Two
Sarah always helps to feed the pets when she visits her Nanna's house and is able to recognise each pet's tinned food by the pictures. She is able to use the sign potential of the pictures to recognise the same foods in another context, and to recognise that in yet another context it is cat food but a different variety.

An important assumption of the semiotic theory on which this study is premised is that 'signs exist in the environment as complexes of linguistic and non-linguistic cues forming potential messages or texts' (Halliday, 1978). In any given instance only some aspects of the meaning potential are selected for signification. The aspects that are chosen for signification are determined by the learner's purpose and personal history of experience, and the context of use.
Within the social settings of home and community, children witness, are part of, and initiate continuous demonstrations of literacy use which are meaningful and purposeful. Over time, through active intercession with people and literacy artefacts, they utilise what they see to be significant signs and develop strategies which allow them to initiate and sustain literacy use for their own purposes and in their own way.

PICTURE STORY BOOK READING AS AN OPEN POTENTIAL
This discussion focuses on the informants' perception of the picture story books as open potentials for meaning making and their search for what they see to be significant signs in the written language and illustrations. Just as signs in social literacy generate a range of hypotheses and interpretations depending on the informants' current social, cognitive and linguistic history, aspects of picture story books too generated a range of responses as the informants transact at a variety of levels with each book.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY
During shared and repeated rereadings, both informants continuously found new potentials to explore in the written language and illustrations. No two readings of the same book were ever completely identical for either informant. Self-selected features in the language and illustrations became the catalysts for discussions concerning letter formation, innovative retellings, number, food preferences, past events, colour and patterns. The following extracts from the data illustrate the informants' use of the books to generate particular meaning at a particular time.
Informant A

Leif has plastic letters and a magnet board, and spends a great deal of time making words by asking his parents to spell them and then finding the letters. His parents frequently use his letters to spell out family names for him to recognise. In this example he uses Rosie's name to instigate a discussion concerning letters.

Sample One

Text: *Rosie's Walk.*

Leif is closely examining the letters on the title page.

L. What does that say?
M. What do you think it says?
L. Rosie.
M. Yes.
L. Rosie's Walk.
M. Does it?
L. Yeh.
M. Yeh.
L. There it is. But I don’t understand what the I and the O and the A and the S.
M. What darling?
L. I don’t understand the S on it.
M. An "S"?
L. No.
M. In Rosie?
L. Yeh.
M. Yes. Rosie's Walk.
L. But ...
M. Didn’t you see it back in the other one?
Sample Two

In the following instance, Leif decides to use the illustrations in Rosie's Walk as a frame to tell the story backwards, or as he puts it, the book becomes an upside down book.

M. I would really like to hear Rosie's Walk.
L. It's changed.
M. It's changed. Why, what's happened to it?
L. It's just changed.
M. What to?
L. It's an upside down book.
M. An upside down book! Oh well, come on you read it for me.
L. No, it's upside down again.
M. Aren't you going to read it for me?
L. No.
M. Oh dear.
L. Rosie went for a platter. She ...
M. You're reading that back to front.
L. And she went to her, she bought a bag.
M. Bought a bag did she?
L. Yeh.
M. What kind of bag?
L. A box ... shopping bag.
M. Oh.
L. Then she went shopping and then the fox got bited by the bees. Down and bonk. Why does it? Well Rosie went bong. Down came the bong and there's the dong, dong, dong.
M. No one can understand that story, isn't that a pity.
L. And ...
M. I thought you were being so kind to me.
L. Then the flour pulled.
M. Would you like to start at the beginning for me.
L. And came out the ...
M. I don't think I like back to front stories very much.
L. And then the troll got, then the fox got stuck into the hay.
M. Right.
L. But then he went over it. Right over. It says Rosie. Sploooosh. Birds flying away, frogs. Across the pond.
M. Oh Ho, that does not say across the pond. You know better.
L. Across the mill, across and back to her house at last. And bye bye.
M. That's the most back to front story I've ever heard.

In response to his Mother's request to read the story conventionally, he begins again but after the first line tells the story from the illustrations.
in oral language form punctuated by sound effects and some original innovations.

M. Would you like to read it right way round for me now?
L. Of course!
M. Thank you. I would be so pleased.
L. Rosie went for a walk. There's the title page on the farm.
M. Yes.
L. Rosie went for a walk. Booiinnngg! The fox ran into the hay and um the fox ran into the rake. Then round the pond. A birdie up there.
M. Mmm.
L. Fox got jumped into the pond. Sploooosh. Goat, three billy goat gruff and stuck, stuck, stuck.
M. What?
L. That duck's stuck, the flower pond. Big old flour falled out of the windmill.
M. What does that say?
L. Um, um, um, through the fence, the fox fell into the trolley. BANG. BZZZ. Sting and back in time for dinner.
M. Mmm. What do you think Rosie has for her dinner?
L. Um. Maybe hen food.
M. Hen food. Oh well, that's a thought isn't it?
L. Mmm.

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Sample One

In this example, Leif has decided to focus his attention on the letters in Rosie's name. This is a current interest in social literacy where he is constantly hypothesising about environmental print and print in
newspapers, and Rosie's Walk becomes a further potential context to focus on the sign system of print.

**Sample Two**

On this occasion, Leif is determined not to share the story in the conventional way, so he uses the illustrations and works from back to front to create a 'changed version'. Even his usually very precise language is abandoned in both versions as he reverts to 'the fox got bited', 'flour faled out' and adds sound effects to further provoke his Mother. Although Leif appears to be just playing around, his interpretation is a sophisticated use of illustration as a sign potential to generate an alternative way of telling the story.

**DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY**

**Informant B**

The following extracts from the data, over a period of twelve months, illustrate the open potential of one favourite book for this informant.

**Sample One**

**Text: The Very Hungry Caterpillar.**

January, 1987

S. Egg. Put egg on. Look there. Cappa come egg. Try

M. He's gone to look for food has he?

S. Yep.

M. Ohhh.

S. Look food ...

M. What did he find?

S. Two apples.

M. Mmm.
S. Two apples.
M. One apple.
S. Hungry.
M. Still hungry?
S. Apple. Still hungry.
S. Some pears.
M. Mmm. Two pears.
S. Still hungry.
M. Still hungry.
S. Still hungry. Two apples. More pears.
M. More pears?
S. More pears. Still hungry.
M. Oh.
S. Two plums.
M. Three plums.
S. Two plums. Plum, plum, plum.
M. Mmm.
S. Still hungry.
M. Still hungry.
S. Still hungry. Two plums.
M. Three plums. Plum, plum, plum (points to each one in turn).
S. Derry, derry, derry, derry, derry (strawberry).
M. Good girl.
S. Derry, derry.
M. Still hungry.
S. Still hungry derry, derry, derry, derry, derry (points to oranges).
M. No, that's not a strawberry. What's that?
S. That's orange.
M. Orange. That's right.

**Sample Two**

**Text:** *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*


M. What are you doing?
S. Reading.
M. Oh.
S. I'm going see. I'm going capercake, that capercake hey.
M. That's a capercake.
S. Yeh.
M. Mmm.
S. I like it capercake.
M. Pardon.
S. I like it capercake.
M. Yeh, Sarah had a capercake.
S. Yeh.
M. Was it nice?
S. I get me's got capercake nice.
M. Mmm.
S. Oh num nums. Oh yummy, yummy, yummy got pickle and salami, ums cake and ice-cream and pickle and cheese and salami and lollipop and pie and ... sandwich and cake and watermelon and caterpillar. It's got capercake, it's got cake, it's got nice green leaf, it's got nice green leaf. Fat caterpillar it's got big caterpillar, it's got house moon, it's
got beautiful butterfly. It's got him's num nums. Where's he say, oh what's caterpillar say? Oh here is.

**Sample Three**

**Text:** *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*


Sue. Mmm. What's this one?
S. Hungry caterpillar.
Sue. Caterpillar.
S. Other one dies.
Sue. It, what died?
S. Caterpillar dies.
Sue. Did your caterpillar die?
S. Yeh.
Sue. Oh, we'll have a look at them in a minute.
S. I'm going to get other one.
Sue. You going to get other one?
S. Yeh.
Sue. You going to have a look at this?
S. Yeh, I read little sad egg.

**Sample Four**

**Text:** *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*


S. I read, read caterpillar.
N. Oh, there he is, there he is.
S. Ohhh.
N. The Very Hungry Caterpillar.
S. Nice num nums (points to coloured dots on the end papers).

N. Yeh, nice num nums. Lots of colours.

S. Yeh, where colour at?

N. Yellow.

S. Where's colour at ... yellow?

N. Yeh.

S. Where's colour at this one?

N. Orange.

S. What's this one at?

N. Pink. The very hungry.

S. What's this one say? What's this pink?

N. Blue.

S. Blue, what's this one?

N. That's brown. Look at this. That says to Sarah, with love from Da and Poppa.

S. What's this one?

N. Purple.

S. Purple, that's right, purple. That pink?

N. Mmm, and here's the sun.

S. Oh.

N. In the light of the moon a little egg ......

**Sample Five**

**Text:** The Very Hungry Caterpillar.


M. Oh, did he have a sore tummy?

S. Yeh, he eat this and this and this and this (goes back and points to some of foods on the double page).
M. He ate all them and he was so sick. The next day was Sunday again. The caterpillar ate through one ...

S. Piece of 1, 4, 5.

M. 5?

S. 1, 2, 6, 11.

M. Oh just one.

S. Just one?

M. One nice green leaf.

S. 4 there’s 1 and 3.

M. Pardon?

S. There’s 1 and 3.

M. Oh, the holes.

S. Yeh.

M. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 there’s five holes in the leaf.

S. Yeh.

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Sample One

During this sharing Sarah is carefully pointing to each piece of fruit, concentrating on naming and counting them, and on the text "still hungry". The important sign potentials during this reading are number and the names of the fruits, and the text ‘still hungry’ which signals that the caterpillar will eat something further.

Sample Two

This time Sarah is ‘reading’ the book to her Mother, and has chosen to begin on the double page spread of food. Capercake is a cupcake, but is firmly established as a capercake (caterpillar cake), her favourite, and a treat sometimes when they go shopping. The picture acts as a sign
potential for a discussion about how she enjoys her ‘capercakes’ and she then reads her version of the remainder of the text.

Sample Three

The following discussion refers to the death of one of her silkworms which, of course, are ‘cappas’. For several days each time she read this book she talked about the silkworms as the picture acted as a sign to remind her of that experience. Over a year later she suddenly recalled her silkworms again during a shared reading.

Sample Four

Sarah is very interested in colours in her world at this time and instigates this discussion about the end papers of the book which are covered in coloured dots. She calls these dots ‘num nums’ because to her all sweets are num nums and she thinks the coloured dots are ‘Smarties’ as they look very similar to a ‘Smarties’ packet. Colour, size and shape have created the sign potentials for this hypothesis.

Sample Five

In this response to the text she is concentrating on the five holes that the caterpillar has eaten through the leaf. Each of the foods that the caterpillar has eaten previously have a corresponding number of holes in them and Sarah has perceived this pattern as a consistent sign and is puzzled when it is suddenly broken. She is actively searching for unity based on her hypothesis and the pattern she had identified as a sign.

Harste, Burke and Woodward (1984) maintain that ‘language users assume that the various signs in the literacy event are intentional, non random, and together operate to create a unified meaning ... language learners seemingly assume that it is not beneficial to ignore or
disregard objects perceived as signs’ (p.110). Sarah’s response to this text clearly adds evidence to this assertion.

In picture book story reading, the text and illustrations are seen by the emergent literacy learner to be an open potential for meaning making. The repeated opportunities to return to the book as a shared experience and to utilise further demonstrations by the experienced language users; to engage in independent rereadings to practice, refine, confirm, or to generate new hypothesis about aspects of the language or illustrations; the opportunity just to enjoy the experience again and reflect on it; expanding experience and linguistic facility; mean that over a period of time the book will generate multiple interpretations.

As discussed in Chapter One, Peirce (1932) saw semiosis as unlimited in principle, ‘a sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity’. Not all the possibilities are played out in any instance of semiosis. Each sign, interpretant, object, interpreter and ground are open to individual examination and variation.

As can be seen from this data, what the language user takes the sign to mean is a function of his or her purpose and background of experience at that time. The text and illustration form an open potential, part of a semiotic data pool, through which the child constantly generates new hypotheses and discovers new meanings.
THE EMERGENT LITERACY LEARNER AS MEANING MAKER

As demonstrated in the preceding discussions concerning social literacy and picture story book reading experiences, evidence has emerged from this study to support the view of the emergent literacy learner as an active meaning maker progressively taking ownership over the process of learning about literacy by selective use of available demonstrations of authentic literacy use from experienced language users and utilisation of aspects of these demonstrations for the achievement of his own purposes and the furthering of his own understandings. A feature of this learning is the use made of the sign potentials in his social and cultural world, and how these sign potentials are constantly orchestrated and re-orchestrated to fit his growing social, cognitive and linguistic facility.

These insights into literacy learning from the perspective of the learner illuminate the meaning making strategies described in the following section of this study. By acknowledging the learners as active, significant participants in the making of meaning, we are able not only to see what they know about picture story book reading, but more importantly, to gain valuable insights into how they know it.

Data Samples

Throughout this discussion extracts from the audiotaped data are used to illustrate each strategy. To illustrate the range of strategies which may occur in any one sharing, a complete transcript for each informant of one story sharing is included in appendices one and two.
MEANING MAKING STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING PICTURE STORY BOOKS

From a careful and systematic analysis of emerging data, a number of key sets of strategies have been identified which the two informants in this study used to initiate and utilise demonstrations, to deepen and sustain their deepening involvement in the experiences and finally to gain ownership over many processes for making meaning from the experience of picture story book reading.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the strategies that emerged from analysis of the data can be broadly grouped into four categories:

* strategies for initiating engagement in picture story book reading;
* strategies for sustaining and deepening engagement in picture story book reading;
* strategies for taking ownership of the content and process of picture story book reading;
* strategies for connecting past and current literacy, language and world experiences.

STRATEGY SET ONE

INITIATING ENGAGEMENT IN PICTURE STORY BOOK READING

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

In much the same way as a small child begins walking by negotiating his way around furniture, gradually relinquishing support until he can stand and ultimately walk alone, the emergent literacy learners begin their overt engagement with picture story book reading. Initially they
rely on the support of experienced readers to provide demonstrations of the purpose and process of reading, and responses to their attempts. The following strategies were used to initiate engagement in reading.

1.1 REQUESTING DEMONSTRATIONS

Informant A.

Once it ... (long pause) No. You read it.

You read and then I'll read it.

M. You read it to me.
L. No way Jose.
M. Why?
L. Because you read better than me.

Informant B:

We read? Da do (Nanna do the reading please).

We read this one. Go on (picking up and opening a book as though she is going to read, then handing it over).

Mummy can read cappa? (asking Mother to read).

You read it then I read it.

1.2 CONFIRMING ENGAGEMENT IN THE EXPERIENCE

Informant A

Text: The Fat Cat.

M. Fat Cat.
L. Fat Cat? Fat Cat.
M. You don’t know the Fat Cat?
L. No. Fat Cat.
There was once an old woman who was cooking some gruel (M. points to the gruel and adds "that's like soup"). She had some business with a neighbour woman and asked the cat if he would look after the gruel while she was gone. "I'll be glad to", said the cat.

He's not very fat there is he?

No.

But when the old woman had gone, the gruel looked so good that the cat ate it all and the pot too.

Ooh. And what else?

Oh. We'll have to see. He's got a bit fatter now, hasn't he?

When the old woman came back, she asked the cat "Now what has happened to the gruel?" "Oh", said the cat, "I ate the gruel and I ate the pot too. And now I'm also going to eat YOU." And he ate the old woman.

He's getting bigger now, isn't he?

In the light of the moon, a little egg lay on a leaf.

Informant B.

Text: The Very Hungry Caterpillar.
S. Yes.
M. On Sunday morning, the warm sun came out.
S. Yes.
M. And out of the egg POP came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar.
S. Yes.
M. He started to look for some food.
S. Yes.

1.3 INTERACTING WITH THE LANGUAGE OF THE STORY

Informant A.

Text: *The Fat Cat*.

M. Fat Cat.
L. Fat Cat. Fat Cat.
M. You don’t know the Fat Cat?
L. No. Fat Cat.
M. He ate the gruel
L. Gruel
M. and the pot
L. the pot.

Informant B.

Text: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

M. In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf.
S. Moon. Egg.
M. One Sunday morning the warm sun came out and POP out of the egg came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar.
S. POP (laughs). Cappa (caterpillar).
1.4 FOCUSING ON AN ASPECT OF LANGUAGE

Informant A.

Text: The Fat Cat.
L. Fat Cat.
M. You don't know the Fat Cat?
L. No. I don't know the Fat Cat

Text: Rosie's Walk.
M. All right. Over the Haycock.
L. Over the Haycock.

Informant B.

Text: The Very Hungry Caterpillar.
M. He ate through one nice green leaf.
S. One nice green leaf
one nice green leaf.

1.5 FOCUSING ON AN ASPECT OF ILLUSTRATION

Informant A.

Text: Harriet Reads Signs and more Signs.
L. What's that hole for, that all the ice-cream cones are in?
M. So that the ice-creams won't fall down.
L. What's that for too?
M. That's where he keeps the ice-cream cones. It's like a little refrigerator.
L. Why's it a little refrigerator?
M. Well, the ice-creams would melt, wouldn't they?
L. Mmm.
Informant B.

Text: *Harry the Dirty Dog.*

M. He's digging a hole.

S. Why?

M. So he can bury the scrubbing brush.

S. Oh.

M. Because he doesn't want to have a bath.

S. Why?

M. He doesn't like having a bath.

S. 'Cos him not going to have a bath.

M. Mmm.

S. Him's all dirty.

M. That's right, but he doesn't want to.

S. Him's all like Sarah did (Sarah had got very dirty playing and had cried in the bath because her hair had to be washed).

M. He's naughty, yes.

S. Him's naughty.

M. Mmm.

S. Why him's naughty?

M. Because he won't have a bath.

S. Because him have a bath soon.

M. Yes.

S. Why him's going to have a bath soon?

M. He is.

S. 'Cos him's GOT to have a bath ... Him's going to have a bath when he gets home.
INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Although initially relying on the experienced readers' demonstrations of reading, the ultimate agenda for each informant was the gaining of independence. As in social literacy learning, the driving force of the experience was the search for meaning through what they perceived to be signifying structures in the experience and relationships between the story and their own experiences.

1.1 In each instance the informants have initiated the experience and decided on an agenda for themselves, in each case a demonstration by the experienced language user that they could use to focus on some element in self-selected engagement. This engagement varied. Sometimes it would be an intent listening, another time the child would ask questions about the illustrations, or join in where it felt confident. Requests for demonstrations would still occur after the child was very familiar with the book but wanted to focus on a particular aspect or strategy against the backdrop of a reading by a more experienced reader.

1.2 As Smith (1982) reminds us, children are always learning, and although on the surface there appears to be little interaction occurring in this and the previous sample, over a period of time we were able to observe that such a sharing was almost always followed by a request to "read it again" and the child would join in at self-selected places during this next reading. The first demonstration served as an overview to put the story into perspective.
1.3 This strategy would appear again during independent experiences with the books as the children went back and labelled what they found to be either manageable parts of the text in terms of their language facility, or key meaning making elements. Although this labelling version of the story might appear scant at the surface level, it invariably captured the main elements of the story in a shorthand form that was meaningful to the child in the same way that single word utterances generated meaning when he was learning to talk.

Sarah uses this strategy much more frequently than Leif, who is several months older and whose language facility is more developed. Leif more usually uses demonstrations to try to memorise whole stories before responding.

1.4 This appears to be a reflective strategy whereby the informants 'played for extra time' to savour an unusual word such as haycock before asking a question or making some comment about it, to enjoy the resonance of language such as Fat Cat, or to focus on part of the language of the text that had been heard a number of times but which has not previously been singled out for investigation. As in ordinary conversation where some point of interest is elaborated on, this often takes place after repeated experiences with the text had given them a good sense of the overall story.

1.5 The illustrations in picture story books provide the initial context for emergent literacy learners and in many shared readings both mothers survey the pictures with the informants and discuss them, before reading the book. The children each use the
illustrations to generate discussion, particularly when they are puzzled by some aspect of the language or illustration.

While each informant clearly utilises aspects of demonstrations from experienced readers during the process of story sharing, they also begin to generate strategies of their own for meaning making as they themselves explore and unfold the potential for literacy learning from repeated, shared and independent experiences, and bring the successful strategies of social literacy learning and vice versa to this aspect of literacy learning.

STRATEGY SET TWO

SUSTAINING AND DEEPENING INVOLVEMENT IN PICTURE STORY BOOK READING

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

As the informants deepened their involvement in the story reading and began to take over parts of the experience, further strategies emerged which enabled them to use the experienced reader to maintain a sense of the whole story while they increased their risk taking.

2.1 JOINING IN SELF-SELECTED PARTS OF THE STORY

The following examples began almost as a shadowing of parts of the language in which engagement could be sensed more than positively identified as the children either murmured something unintelligible the same length and pattern of the language, or repeated it very quietly a split second after the reader. As my collaborators became aware of the children’s intentions, they began to pause slightly at these points to invite the children’s more overt responses.
Informant A.

Text: *Dear Zoo.*

M. I wrote to the zoo to send me a pet. They sent me an
   ... What?
L. Elephant.
M. Elephant. He was ...
Tog. Too big.
M. I sent him back. They sent me a ...
L. Gorilla.
M. He was too ...
L. Tall.
M. Yes. I sent him back.
L. Mmm.
M. So they sent me a ...
L. Lion.
M. Yes, he was too ...
L. Fierce.
M. Yes, so I sent him back. I would have sent him back
   too.
L. Me too.
M. So they sent me a ...
L. Camel.
M. He was too ...
L. Grumpy.
M. Grumpy. I sent him back. He does look grumpy,
   doesn't he?
L. Mmm.
Informant B.

Text: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*

M. Oh. To Sarah with love from Da and Poppa. OK. In the light of the moon.

S. Yeh.

M. A little egg.

S. Lay leaf.

M. Yeh and here it is, look! A little egg lying on a leaf.

S. Yeh.

M. One Sunday morning the warm sun came up and

S. Pop, tiny hungry caterpillar.

M. Yeh.

S. Tiny caterpillar.

M. Tiny hungry caterpillar. He started to look ...

S. Look food.

M. Looking for food.

S. Yeh.

2.2 TAKING OVER SELECTED PARTS OF THE STORY

As familiarity with both the story and processes of sharing grew, the informants took over more of the reading, keeping closely to the language of the picture story book.

Informant A.

Text: *Dear Zoo.*

L. So they sent me a camel that spits and he was too grumpy. I sent him back.

M. And that says from ...

Tog. The zoo ...

M. So they sent me a ...
L. Snake.
M. Mmm.
L. But he was too scary.

(Mother instigates a conversation about the labels on the box).

M. So they sent me a ...
L. Frog.
M. He was ...
L. Too jumpy. I sent him back. Ribbet, ribbet, ribbet.

Informant B.

Text: The Great Big Enormous Turnip.

M. The old woman pulled the old man.
S. Yes.
M. The old man pulled the turnip.
S. I want to do this section.
M. OK.
S. Old woman pulled the man, man pulled the turnip.
M. Mmm. They pulled and pulled and
S. Pulled
M. And couldn’t
S. Pull it up.
M. Good girl. So the old woman called
S. The granddaughter.
M. Yeh.
S. Then the granddaughter pulled a woman, the woman pulled a man and the man pulled the turnip ... The mice pulled the cat, the cat pulled the dog, and the dog pulled granddaughter, the granddaughter pulled
the woman, woman pulled the man and the man pulled the turnip. Aren’t I good? (Mother smiles and continues story.)

M. Oh, they pulled and pulled

S. And couldn’t ...

M. And up came the turnip.

S. Yeh.

M. Now they’re all eating it aren’t they?

S. Yeh. And that’s the end of the story.

2.3 COMBINING STORY LANGUAGE AND ORAL LANGUAGE

Just as the experienced readers had sometimes demonstrated the strategy of inferencing by thinking out loud about the text, each of the informants used a strategy of putting themselves at the centre of the experience and substituting or adding their own interpretation in their own language.

Informant A

Text: *Three Little Pigs.*

Text: *The wolf came to the house built of sticks.*

L. Watch out for the bad old wolf. He went to the next one of sticks, yes, really a house of sticks. Ha Ha Ha a house of sticks.

Text: *Harry the Dirty Dog.*

Text: "There’s a strange dog in our garden", *said the little girls.*

L. He’s not in his kennel. Why isn’t he in his kennel?

Informant B.

Text: *The Great Big Enormous Turnip.*

S. They couldn’t pull it up again.
M. Good girl. The black dog called ...

S. Called. I want to do this section.

M. OK. You can do this section.

S. OK. Black dog called the cat and said, "I get off a tree in a minute, a time, I have to get off the tree I get off. So he got off". (Text: "The black dog called the cat").

M. Mmm.

S. Then (pause)

M. And he came and helped.

S. Yes. He pulled the dog's black tail. (Text: "The cat pulled the dog").

M. Did he?

S. Yes. And the black dog pulled the granddaughter, granddaughter pulled a woman and a man pulled a turnip.

M. Mmm.

S. Then the cat.

M. And they pulled and pulled again.

S. And couldn’t pull it up. So the cat called a mice if he would help, so he did. (Text: "So the cat called a mouse").

2.4 LIFE TO TEXT CONNECTIONS

Each child repeatedly made connections between the text and real life experiences.

In the following data sample, Leif has construed from the position of the frog's hand near its mouth and the expression on
its face that the frog is going to be sick, because it is eating lots of jelly beans in an effort to regain its own green colour.

**Informant A.**

**Text: Picasso the Green Tree Frog.**

M. Mmm. Didn't want to lose his green colour. At last he was himself again. A green tree frog.

L. He looks a bit sick.

M. Why. Why do you think he could be sick?

L. Because he's got his hand poking out of his mouth.

M. Oh no, I think he's just resting his hand. See, he's resting his hand on his chin like that and you can, that's just the way they drew it.

L. Mmm.

M. Do you think that something would have made him sick?

L. Mmm.

M. What?

L. The jelly beans.

M. Oh, could have been. If you eat too many jelly beans you could get sick, couldn't you?

L. Mmm.

M. Oh, there he is. I can see something funny happening, can't you?

In a further example, Leif and his Mother are reading 'Alfie's Feet' and looking at the illustrations of Alfie in a raincoat.

L. He doesn't have his hat on.

M. What hat?

L. His rain hat like mine. Mine's a yellow one.
M. (Continues to read the text.) Annie Rose's feet were all soft and pink underneath. Are yours like that?

L. (Looking) No. But the babies in the nursery are.

M. Yes. That's because they can't walk around on them much. Amy Beth's are like that too.

L. And Laura's.

M. Yes.

Informant B.

In this sample, Sarah is attempting to make sense of a page in Jack and the Beanstalk, which shows a picture of Jack who has been sent to bed in disgrace for selling the cow for magic beans. Sarah has become afraid of rain, and wakes in the night and cries if she hears rain. She had never seen the book before.

S. And that was crying because that was raining because the rain in sky.

M. Oh. Crying because it's raining.

S. Yeh.

M. Oh. Just because Sarah cries when it rains.

S. Yeh.

M. Is he frightened of the rain Sarah?

S. Mmm.

M. Oh.

S. And that was raining, raining on the window.

M. And did the rain make the beanstalk grow?

S. Yeh.

M. Just like it makes the grass grow?

S. Yeh. But that won't cry.
2.5 SEARCHING FOR SIGNIFICANT PATTERNS

In the search for meaning, both learners constantly searched for what appeared to them to be signifying structures. In each of these samples they had perceived a pattern in the illustrations and expected that pattern to be constant.

Informant A.

Text: *Dear Zoo*

Throughout the text, each animal had been sent in a box or crate which had labels attached with such information as QUIET, DANGER, KEEP OUT. This pattern had not been continued on the final container and Leif was searching for it and questioning its exclusion.

M. He was perfect. I kept him.

L. Why doesn't it say something here? (points to puppy basket).

M. Oh. It just doesn't.

L. Why?

M. I don't know why. And that was it.

Informant B.

Text: *The very Hungry Caterpillar.*

Throughout this text Sarah had noticed that each item the caterpillar ate had a hole in it so that, for example, when he ate two plums there was a hole in each one. As she counted the five holes in the one leaf she was confused, as the pattern was broken. She returned to her agenda until her Mother was able to respond to her hypothesis.

M. The caterpillar ate through one ...

S. Piece of 1, 4, 5
2.6 TELLING STORY FROM ILLUSTRATIONS IN STORY LANGUAGE

As the informants gained familiarity with particular books and the relationship between print and illustrations in general, each began to spontaneously retell the story in story language, using the illustrations as an initial generating context.

Informant A.

Text: *But No Elephants.*

L. But no elephants. See. No elephants. It’s the same on the front, see (Leif shows his Mother the name of the book on the cover and on the title page). But no elephants. That’s Grandma Tildy. (He points out Grandma Tildy in the illustration.) Grandma Tildy lives all alone. She did not, she didn’t have no time to play and she (pause) but one day a man arrived, but one day a man arrived (repeat) he was selling pets. "Would you like to buy a canary bird?", asked the man. "Very well", said Grandma Tildy, "but no elephants!". Look. That’s so the bird wanted to help so he sang a song, that made Grandma Tildy happy.
Informant B.

Text: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*

S. Pears, and still hungry, and pears and was still hungry and plums and still hungry and oranges and still hungry and he ate pears 3, 4, 5 and he was *still* hungry and 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

N. Good girl. 5 oranges.

S. Still hungry.

N. Yes.

S. And Saturday. Saturday morning and capercake, watermelon, pickle, um, ice-cream, and pickle and cheese, salami, lollipop, pie, sausage, capercake, watermelon and was sore tummy.

N. I'm sure he was.

S. And he was all better. Nice green leaf and was all better.

N. Aha.

S. And then was big, fat caterpillar.

N. Wasn't he.

S. And he was come out and pushes him way out and come out of coon and he was beautiful butterfly. Fly away and he was beautiful butterfly and more num nums. That's it. That's it.

N. That's it.

S. Yeh.
INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

Each informant continues to draw upon previous demonstrations and to make the books a lived through experience. In the development of this set of strategies the informants begin to assert their own agendas more.

2.1 This strategy enabled each informant to successfully retrieve part of the text in the secure framework of the experienced language user's scaffold and to respond to a variety of the strategies that experienced readers appear to use, including the rhythm or tune of the book and individual words and phrases. The focus is on maintaining meaning and acting like a reader.

2.2 By gradually relinquishing the amount of scaffolding, the informants maintain a structure against which to risk take with increasing chunks of text while controlling the turn taking.

2.3 The informants' use of this strategy provides evidence that the picture story book is a socially constructed object as they bring their own very fitting language to expand on and interpret the text. As Sulzby (1989) asserts, 'for the child the picture story book is not a physical object, but a socially constructed object' (p.83).

2.4 Each informant consistently makes what Cochran-Smith (1984) describes as 'life to text' and 'text to life' connections as they hypothesise about possible signifying structures in the written text and illustrations, and relate these to their own experiences.

2.5 In the search for meaning, both learners orchestrate and re-orchestrate what they perceived to be signifying structures. Harste (1984) believes that the search for such structures by
which to code and confirm linguistic discoveries as cognitive processing universals characterises the literacy learning process.

2.6 Both children use the illustrations to support their reading of the whole text.

Informant A combines his Mother's reading demonstrations and keeps very closely to the written text. He also points out print that is the same on the cover and the title page.

Informant B also follows the written text closely, although her own oral language use of 'was' changes the text slightly but retains meaning.

STRATEGY SET THREE
TAKING OWNERSHIP OF CONTENT AND PROCESS
Increasingly the children begin to take ownership of the process of reading by assuming the roles and the strategies which have been demonstrated by and shared with the experienced language user. Increasingly too, each begins to experiment with the language and concepts of stories by deliberately innovating on the existing text and inviting the experienced language users response to the innovations. In yet a further move toward ownership, each informant relives the stories through spontaneous role play and drama.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY
3.1 TAKING OWNERSHIP OF THE EXPERIENCED READER'S ROLE
In the following example, Leif takes over his Mother's role in the story sharing and uses strategies that she has demonstrated for meaning making and her language to involve her in the sharing.
Informant A.

Text: Harry the Dirty Dog.

L. Mummy. Will you say "Please read the story to me".
M. Please read the story to me Leif.
L. Um. OK. Real colours come into Harry. (Points to Harry using one of his Mother’s strategies.) See the green colour?
M. Yes.
L. One green colour and the orange colour. Harry. Now. Now. Um. What’s that word Mummy? What does that word say? (Mother’s strategy.)
M. That says Harry.
L. But what’s he doing" (Again using his Mother’s strategy.)
M. He’s got his scrubbing brush in his mouth.
L. But what’s ...
M. That says Harry the Dirty Dog.
L. But what is he doing?
M. I think he’s going to have a bath. (This was a pattern frequently used by his Mother as she read to him. As the ‘experienced reader’, Leif was taking her through the same process.)
L. Yeh. A bath. Harry ran away from the bath. One day Harry saw the water running into the tub and he took the scrubbing brush and buried it in the back garden. Then he came to the street ... (Leif continues to tell the whole story to his Mother, with
frequent "checks" to make sure that she was fully involved).

**Informant B.**

**Text: But No Elephants.**

In this sample, Sarah goes through the routines of beginning a story, then selectively uses the experienced language user to maintain her momentum.

M. What's this one called?
S. No Elephants.
M. But No Elephants. You going to read this to me?
S. Yes. Okay. You ready?
M. Yes. I'm ready. You ready?
S. Um. One day a grand um. Who is it?
M. Grandma Tildy.
S. Grandma Tildy she got up on - What is that?
M. A ladder.
S. A ladder and she picked all the apples off the tree and then the pet man came and said, "Would you like a bird?" "Yes thanks, but NO elephants".

Together laugh.

S. At home the bird helps when she was cooking stew. He sang to her. Then a beaver came again. What's that?
M. A beaver. Would you like a beaver ...?
S. Would you like a beaver? Yes, but NO elephants.
M. Mmm.
S. OK. If there’s only one left when I take all these away. I give it to you if I got to hey. (Refers to the pet man’s animals.)

M. Yes.

(story continues).

3.2 TAKING OWNERSHIP OF LANGUAGE

Increasingly, both informants began to experiment with a variety of deliberate language substitutions in the favourite books.

Informant A.

Text: Rosie’s Walk.

L. Through the beehives.

M. Oh. She didn’t go through the beehives.

L. Across the beehives.

M. No. She didn’t go across the beehives.

L. Um. Upon them.

M. No! You’re teasing me!

L. You tell me then.

Later ...

M. Where does the Fox go now?

L. Over the hill.

M. No! He didn’t go over the hill. What did he go over?

L. The hill.

M. He didn’t.

L. He did.

M. What did he go over? He went over the fence, silly!

(At the end of the book he again investigates alternatives.)

M. And what do you think they had for dinner?
L. I think baked beans on toast.
M. Do you think she'd like that?
L. Yeh.
M. You think hens eat baked beans on toast?
L. Yeh.
M. Is that your favourite dinner?
L. Yes. No. Hens' food.
M. Hens' food. Is that what you eat?
L. Yeh.
M. What's hen food. Do you know?
L. Um. Round and got a 'Cock-a-doodle-doo' on it. A hen.

**Text:** *Harriet Reads Signs and More Signs.*

M. What flavour ice-cream.
L. But. Maybe strawberry.
M. Hmm. But strawberry's usually pink.
L. Oh! Sausages.
M. Sausage! Have you ever heard of sausage flavoured ice-cream?
L. Ha! Ha!

**Informant B.**

**Text:** *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

Sarah is reading the double page spread of foods.

S. Chocolate cake, chocolate cake, chocolate cake, chocolate cake.
M. Oh. All chocolate cake.
S. Yeh.
M. Oh! Do you think so?
S. No. (laughs) ice-cream, cheese, pickle, salami.

Text: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*

S. What he did? (Opens at beginning of story.)

M. What did he do?

S. Pulled the turnip. (Reference to Great Big Enormous Turnip book.)

M. No. The caterpillar didn’t pull a turnip (both laugh). (M. continues the game by reading.) In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf. On Sunday morning the warm sun came up and POP out of the egg came a little Sarah. A tiny, hungry, Sarah.

S. No. I not in there!

(They laugh together, then proceed to read the book conventionally.)

Text: *Rosie’s Walk.*

S. Rosie the Hen went for a walk in the ‘garbage bin’.

M. Did she?

S. No! Rosie the Hen went for a walk across the yard ... (at the end of the book she substitutes again).

S. Rosie went home for dinner and had a hamburger and shake.

M. Oh.

S. No! Home in time for dinner.

3.3 TAKING OWNERSHIP OF STORY CHARACTERS AND STORY LANGUAGE

Story characters and their language were used to achieve the informants’ purposes in everyday situations.
Informant A.
Context: Sitting in the sunroom with his Father, who is reading the paper. He wants his Father’s attention but knows he shouldn’t interrupt.

L. I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your paper down!
F. Where did you learn that?
L. At Kindy. Dad ...

Informant B.
Context: Sarah is in the lounge with her Mother. They both watch as Emma, aged 2, comes out of her bedroom and carefully closes the door.

E. My baby’s ’sleep. (She has put her doll to bed in her room.)
S. I’m going to wake her baby up.
M. No you’re not.
S. (After a long thoughtful pause.) I’m going to be a Troll today Mum. A big mean Troll.
M. Are you now?
S. Yes. And I’m going to wake Emma’s baby up.
M. No you’re not!
S. Yes I am, because I a Troll and Trolls do naughty things.
M. No you’re not.
S. But Trolls can.
M. Not this Troll. Leave Emma’s baby alone!

3.4 MOVING TO ANOTHER COMMUNICATION SYSTEM
This strategy was consistently used by informant A as a way of ensuring autonomy in his versions of the stories.
Informant A.

Context: Leif and his Mother are reading Harry the Dirty Dog and Leif becomes frustrated with the interaction. He goes and gets his clockwork mouse and winds it up, making graphic sound effects.

L.  Hey. You be the mother mouse.
M.  Me?
L.  Yes.
M.  What do I have to do if I'm the mother mouse?
L.  You say, "Baby mouse, you are so dirty".
M.  Oh. Baby mouse, you are so dirty.
L.  Yeh. I have to have a bath.
M.  Oh! Are you the baby mouse.
L.  Yes.
M.  How did you get so dirty, baby mouse?
L.  Oh. Because I went down the coal chute.
M.  You went down the coal chute?
L.  Yes.
M.  Oh. No wonder you are so dirty. Coal chutes make you really dirty.

Several days later Leif again moves to a different communication system when he decides to put on a puppet show of Little Red Hen.

L.  I'll tell you, and you have to look, and first the talking comes. You have to sit in front.
M.  Where?
L.  In the front.
M.  Over here. Oh. In the front.
L. Duck will help me do it. Oh no. Way too little. Dog, will you help me do it. Woof. No. I too busy. Then I'll do it myself. Da, da da la la.

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

As the two informants took control of picture book sharing experiences, aspects of earlier demonstrations by the experienced readers were clearly evident in the roles and strategies that were assumed. Evidence also of their own self-generated strategies emerge as they investigate the fittingness of alternative language, used story language and characters to achieve their purposes in everyday life, and move the stories into other modes of communication.

3.1 This strategy enabled the informants to take another perspective on the reading experience by assuming the experienced reader's role within the security of a shared situation. Clearly, both informants see sense making as a major aim of the reading. Leif combines print and illustrative cues in his search for meaning, while Sarah uses the illustrations and adds some of her own language to illustrate more graphically how she sees the exchange between the reluctant Grandma Tildy and the insistent pet man. Sulzby and Teale (1989) describe these re-enactments where the child gradually takes over the parents' role and states that repeated rereadings appear to be an important component of shared story reading.

Iser (1988) asserts that the meaning which results from literacy transactions serves as a frame of reference for a new experience.
3.2 In these examples both children use the structure of the story and the patterning of the language to generate some meaningful and some deliberately nonsensical innovations. This generative strategy becomes a language game between both informants and their parents, a true self-initiated reader response to the language of these favourite books. Chukovsky (1963) writes how pre-school children improvise and explore words and maintains 'beginning with the age of two, every child becomes for a short period, a linguistic genius' (p.9).

3.3 In a further generative strategy, both children incorporate story concepts and story language into their real worlds to achieve particular purposes. For them, all of language is a potential.

3.4 Drawing on the work of Brooks Smith (1986), Goodman (1988) posits a view of learning which involves three processes: perceiving, ideating, and presenting. He asserts that through the process of presentation we engage in transactions which help to reconstruct perceptions and ideas, transforming as we present and changing again through response. In the course of these social transactions, not only are perception and ideas changed, but we also modify the language in which we are expressing them as we experience social response' (p.8). Through presentation Leif transforms the language and concepts in such a way that he assumes total control over the situation.

The active, personal and interpretative responses of the two young informants to shared and independent readings and rereadings of favourite picture story books and their developing strategies for meaning making are consistent with a transactional approach to
reading. Although these children are not yet reading from print, they are transacting with the deep structure of the texts in an interaction between the author, the illustrator, the written language, the experienced reader and their own world knowledge and linguistic facility to arrive at meaning.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND PICTURE STORY BOOK READING
The use of intertextuality as a meaning making strategy was consistently used by each of the informants. As discussed in the preceding chapters, intertextuality is the process of interpreting current texts by making connections with these and previously composed texts. The catalyst for intertextual tying took a variety of forms, depending on what the literacy learners saw as signifying structures at the time and included a perceived link between artwork, formatting, language form or content, or any combination of these together with the learners' background of life and literacy experiences. While instances of intertextuality appear throughout the previous data, its implications for the planning of learning environments and experiences merits its discussion as a strategy in its own right.

Three broad categories were identified as being major uses of intertextuality. These were:

- Links with other picture story books
- Links with life experiences
- Links with other communication systems.

LINKS WITH OTHER PICTURE STORY BOOKS
DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY
On many occasions both informants used some aspect of a known book as a way of initiating meaning making with an unknown book.
1.1 Informant A.

Texts: \textit{Time}  
\textit{Peep-O.}

L. Mum. You read 'What's the time'. You sit in the chair. I'll give you the book. I'll sit on your knee.

M. Do you know what kind of clock it is?

L. No.

M. It's a cuckoo clock. When it's o'clock, the little bird pops out and says "Cuckoo, cuckoo".

L. It's a peep-o clock (from Ahlbergs' "Peepo").

M. No. A cuckoo clock.

L. (Laughing) No. Peepo clock. (He kept this up all day.)

1.2 Informant B.

Texts: \textit{The Great Big Enormous Turnip.}  
\textit{Ten In The Bed.}

\textbf{Figure 4}
When Sarah comes to this page of 'Ten in the Bed', she immediately connects this illustration to the illustration in the well known story of The Great Big Enormous Turnip and comments, "That like Turnip book". She then proceeds to try out the language structure of the known book on this book. "Zebra pulled Nellie, Croc pulled Zebra, Teddy pulled Croc, Hedgehog pulled Teddy. They pulled and pulled and couldn't pull him's up".

Figure 5
1.3 **Text: *Harry the Dirty Dog.*

In this example, Sarah is telling the story from the illustrations in a mixture of story language and oral language. Her version of this page reads:

"Him went up the steps, across the bridge. Trippin' and trappin' across the bridge."

(Actual text reads 'He played by the railway and got even dirtier.)

---

**Figure 6**

This is a link to the language in the book "The Three Billy Goats Gruff", which has been triggered by the picture of the bridge linking both sides of the railway line, and Harry crossing the bridge.
INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Ahlberg's book 'Peepo' with a cut-out circle showing objects related to specific events in the life of a baby was a firm favourite which had instigated games of 'Peepo' as well. Clearly, Leif is connecting the two experiences in this example.

1.2 From her experience with the 'Turnip' book, Sarah feels that she can read these two pages in the same way. When her Mother reads the text as it is written, Sarah corrects her. "No. Hedgehog, Sheep, Mouse, Nellie, Rabbit", and so on, carefully following the sequence of toys in the illustrations in the same way as language and illustration matched in her turnip book.

1.3 Not only is Sarah using intertextuality prompted by the illustration of the railway bridge to try on some alternative and quite appropriate language to tell her version of Harry, but the combination of story and oral language is also a form of intertextuality that carries the meaning of the story for her.

Harste (1984) suggests that 'from a semiotic perspective, texts sign other texts and hence act as both past and potential texts in their own right. The search for and discovery of suspected and unsuspected harmonies between past texts and current texts constitutes learning' (p.170). In each of the preceding samples from the data meaning has been generated through the interaction which involved the reader's past life and language experiences and the sign complex formed by print, illustration and other communication systems in relation to the situational context.
LINKS BETWEEN PICTURE STORY BOOKS AND LIFE EXPERIENCES

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Informant A

2.1 Text: *Harriet Reads Signs and More Signs.*

Throughout the sharing of this text, which incorporates into a story the signs Harriet sees on her way to visit her Grandma, Leif constantly makes links between the story and real life. He thinks that the ice-cream cart may have his favourite ice-cream, a Billabong, and predicts that a small sign on the cart reads Billabong.

M. Take your finger away so I can see. Oh yes it does look, maybe that's where he puts his money when people buy the ice-creams.

L. Mmm.

M. Mmm.

L. Um, see that. What's that hole for?

M. I don't know, they look like spoons or sticks or something.

L. Yeh, sticks they are.

M. Yeh.

L. Maybe, they've got Billabongs too.

M. Oh, maybe they have.

L. See it says, Billabong, see that little word there.

M. Does it?

L. That says Billabong.

M. No, that doesn't say Billabong.

L. What?
M. That word, those words there?
L. Yeh.
M. No, that doesn't say Billabong.
L. What does it say then?
M. It says ice-cream.
L. Oh. Ice-cream was yukky ice-cream.
M. Oh, go on with you.

Text: Rosie's Walk.

Leif is teasing his Mother with the response that Rosie the Hen would enjoy baked beans on toast for her dinner. He then teases her further with his assertion that he would like hen food. In both cases he is using texts from real life situations to change the implied text of the book.

L. Back in time.
L. Back in time for dinner.
M. Yes, what do you think Rosie has for dinner?
L. I think baked beans on toast.
M. Do you think she'd like that?
L. Yeh.
M. You think hens eat baked beans on toast?
L. Yeh.
M. Is that your favourite dinner?
L. Yes. No. Hen's food.
M. Hen's food. Is that what you eat?
L. Yeh.
M. What's hen food, do you know?
L. Um. Round and got a 'Cock a Doodle Doo' on it. A hen.

M. Has it really? Have you ever seen hen food? You just think that's what it must be like.

**Text: Each Peach, Pear, Plum**

In the following instance Leif uses a concept from the book to let his Mother know that he is hungry. He knows that she will probably be amused by his play and accede to his request.

After pulling everything out, Leif is sitting in his bedroom cupboard reading his 'Spot' books. Later he comes out and says to his Mother.

L. I'm Tom Thumb and I've just come out of the cupboard. You be Mother Hubbard. (Actual text. Tom Thumb in the cupboard. I spy Mother Hubbard.)

M. OK. What do I do?

L. Are you making a pie?

M. No.

L. Then look in your cupboard. I'm hungry!

2.3 **Informant B**

As the books become lived through experiences and central to her life experiences, Sarah frequently includes them in everyday conversations.

**Text: The Great Big Enormous Turnip.**

As she and her Father dress in jeans and braces one morning, she comments 'We both like old man in Turnip book'.
Figure 7
Sarah is helping her very pregnant Mother pull weeds from the garden when she spontaneously grabs hold of the back of her Mother’s dress and says "We pull and pull but we couldn’t pull it up". This became a regular gardening game for a few days.

Figure 8
2.4 **Text: Harry the Dirty Dog.**

Sarah and her Mother are out shopping and her Mother tries on a white dress with black spots on it.

M. Do you like this one, Sarah?

S. Yes, you look like Harry the Dirty Dog. You white with black spots like Harry.

M. *Well, that's settled that hasn't it.*

![Harry the Dirty Dog](image)

2.5 **Text: The Very Hungry Caterpillar.**

The family are playing cards at the dining room table. Sarah is playing nearby, every now and then climbing onto someone's knee to watch the card game.

1st player: I'll see you. What have you got?

2nd player: Two pairs.

Sarah: (Looking at the cards.) 'No. No pears. No cappa'. Carefully she turns over the cards and looks at the
pictures. Shaking her head she reiterates ‘Not cappa. Capilla eat yum yums’. Sarah's favourite book is "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" and she has associated the ‘two pairs’ call with the words in the book, ‘two pears’.

Her own 'life texts' were frequently related to the books that she was reading as well.

2.6 Text: *Rosie's Walk*.


![Figure 10](image)

On Tuesday he ate through two pears, but he was still hungry.

![Figure 11](image)

N. Can you see a band-aid on fox's nose?

S. No. READ Nanna.

Figure 12

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY
In each of the previous examples both informants have assumed that the past texts that they have encountered will be useful in their current attempts to make sense of the world. Not only are the texts useful for providing frameworks and language for encounters with written language, but with other life experiences.

LINKS WITH OTHER COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS
DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY
Both informants incorporated concepts and language from favourite books into their games, drama, art and songs in unique and imaginative ways and as responses to other demonstrations at other times. Through these transformations both informants adopted new perspectives.
3.1 Informant A

In the following example, Leif creates a game which uses the language and concepts of a well known story "Mr. Gumpy's Outing".

Following a shared reading of 'Mr. Gumpy's Outing', Leif suggests, 'Let's play Mr. Gumpy'.

M. How do you do that?

L. You be Mr. Gumpy in your boat and I'll be the rabbit. "May I come with you?"

M. Yes, if you don't hop about.

Leif climbs on her knee to be 'in the boat' and the game continues as he adds the other animals from the story.

L. Then they were all naughty and fell out - splash (he falls off his Mother's knee and ends the game).

3.2 Leif has been introduced to the idea of puppet shows at child care and this has become a frequently used strategy for revisiting favourite picture story books at home. In this example, Leif is alternatively the producer, stage manager, narrator and each of the animals, and also produces sound effects. He has created a chimney where he places each character after it has had its turn.

L. Pig. Would you do it?

(Changes voice.) Oh no! I'm too busy.

He puts the pig back in the chimney and says, 'Go back in the chimney. No smoke comes out'.

So she asked the duck (changes voice) 'Duck will you help me do it?
(Changes voice again.) Oh no! Way too little. The duck can go in the middle of the chimney. She asked the dog. (Changes voice.) Dog, will you help me do it? Woof. No. I too busy. (Changes voice.) Then I’ll do it myself. Da da da la la (sings a little tune.)

3.3 Informant B

Text: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*

In a further example, Sarah sees the similarity between the clothes pegs and the shape of a butterfly's wings and uses this to add an element of drama to a well known story, as well as ensuring her central role in the experience. She and her two year old sister, Emma, are sitting with their Nanna reading the *Very Hungry Caterpillar.* Emma is doing most of the sharing and Sarah is watching. Sarah picks up two clothes pegs which are shaped E and puts them end to end. She pretends to flap them and says ‘beautiful butterfly, beautiful butterfly’ throughout the story. When they come to the double page spread of the butterfly she flaps the pegs again, then jumps down onto the floor with a peg in each hand and dances around the room flapping her arms and singing beautiful butterfly, beautiful butterfly, fly away, fly away.

3.4 Text: *The Three Billy Goats Gruff.*

Sarah and friends are playing in the local park on a wooden construction of ladders, slides, forts and bridges. One suspended bridge makes a clacking noise as they cross over it and she calls
out "trip, trap, trip, trap over the bridge". This then becomes a
game as each goat crosses the bridge and sings the repetitive
'trip, trap, trip, trap' refrain.

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

As Smith (1982) so cogently reminds us, creative imagination forms the
basis of our interactions with the world. As the previous examples
show, both informants incorporate concepts and language from
favourite books into their games, drama, and role play in unique and
imaginative ways, as well as in response to other demonstrations.

Intertextuality emerged as a powerful and pervasive strategy for
initiating and sustaining the informants' engagement in picture story
book reading, and in enabling them to eventually take ownership of the
language and concepts in a variety of ways.

The evidence from each broad category of intertextuality suggests that
emergent literacy learners not only make connections between past and
current texts in the search for meaning, but also use the process of
intertextuality for the generation of meaning through other
communication systems in transformations. The process of
intertextuality is then, a powerful potential for meaning making,
supporting and sustaining the informants' engagement in picture story
book reading by providing a network of possible interpretations.

In this chapter I have presented data to support the view of the
emergent literacy learner as an active learner progressively assuming
responsibility for his own literacy learning through negotiations with
experienced literacy users, texts and contexts and the flexible use of
multiple sign systems. In the following chapter, interpretations of this
Data in relation to my theoretical stance will be merged into a grounded theory concerning the relationship between picture story book reading and the development of strategies related to the process of reading.
CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC THEORY OF PICTURE STORY BOOK READING

The orchestration of all signifying structures from all available communication systems in the event have an integral part.

(Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984:208)

INTRODUCTION TO DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study has investigated the strategies that emergent literacy learners develop for meaning making from shared and independent rereading of favourite picture story books. The theoretical framework of the study has incorporated a semiotic perspective which assigns a constructive role to the reader in the creation of meaning and regards the picture story books as open potentials for meaning making. Such a perspective affords the opportunity to explore what it is that emergent literacy learners know about literacy and how they come to know this by taking into consideration the contextual influences which contribute to meaning making. Naturalistic methodology has been used in data collection as this best supports my stated theoretical stance.

The adoption of a naturalistic methodology, combined with a semiotic perspective for studying children’s evolving meaning making strategies from the experience of shared and independent rereadings of favourite picture story books, has produced evidence as demonstrated throughout the preceding chapter to support the findings of other researchers in this field (Sulzby, 1984, 1985, 1987; Teale, 1984, 1987; Goodman, 1984, 1985; Taylor, 1983, 1986; White, 1954; Martinez and
Roser, 1985; Harste, Burke and Woodward, 1984; Yaden, 1985). As well, new insights concerning how emergent literacy learners develop strategies for meaning making, which are congruent with the process of reading, have emerged. In the following section, I will briefly discuss the implications of the methodology and theoretical perspective for the results of the study before discussing the actual results.

IMPLICATIONS OF NATURALISTIC METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY OF PICTURE STORY BOOK READING

The adoption of a naturalistic approach has enabled my collaborators and I to experience and document the ongoing contexts and events in each family which provide multiple demonstrations of literacy use and through which the informants generate literacy learning for themselves in the roles of onlookers and active participants. We have been able to see what the informants acted on in these situations and how they went about it, and to note the connections they continuously made between past and current literacy experiences through the use of intertextuality. Regular member checks have ensured a continuing dialogue between my collaborators and myself concerning the constantly evolving data. This has assisted greatly in keeping the informants' strategies in perspective and in enabling us to devise optimum methods of data collection for each family situation, thus ensuring we capture the network of events which contribute to the development of meaning making strategies. As Taylor (1986) reminds us:

‘Literacy is a dynamic process of immeasurable complexity that moves imperceptibly with the family, accommodating to the personal experiences of individual family members and taking place in the enduring events of their combined life histories. Each family member's experience of print is personally constructed as well as socially owned ...’

(p.140).
Naturalistic methodology provides the flexibility to follow literacy development from the perspective of the learner. Adopting this methodology has enabled us to collect significant evidence to support the view that children themselves are active meaning makers, as we have documented them selectively acting on available demonstrations to make use of the acts and artefacts of social and picture story book literacy for their own purposes and, in doing so, sorting out rules and strategies for interpreting literacy in a variety of ways.

**IMPLICATIONS OF A SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE FOR THE STUDY OF PICTURE STORY BOOK READING**

A semiotic perspective and subsequent focus on meaning making provides a new lens for observing picture story book reading through which all contextual factors can be taken into consideration, thus exposing the networks of meaning and potential meaning in which the practice is embedded. A semiotic model of reading assigns a similar constructive role to both readers and authors (Rosenblatt, 1978; Siegal, 1984). Both engage in the process of semiosis, the interpretation of signs. In picture story book reading, a similar constructive role must be assigned to the illustrator who, in collaboration with the author, provides a vital meaning making potential. Examples from the data demonstrate this constructive role as each informant brings their own meaning and uses their personal language to generate and convey meaning in response to a one page illustration from the book ‘Rosie’s Walk’ on a number of different occasions.

In this book, no mention is ever made of the hapless fox who stalks Rosie the Hen as she goes on her walk. Throughout the story, the fox
encounters mishap after mishap and Rosie returns home seemingly unaware of his presence and completely unscathed. The role of the fox is shown by the illustrator only. In addition, the written language is sparse, consisting of one 32 word sentence. Clearly the author and illustrator expect readers to play a constructive role in the reading by bringing their own language and life experience to the book. Examples from the data demonstrate this constructive role, this transaction between readers, author and illustrator, during several different readings of this page of the book. The text reads, 'Rosie the hen went for a walk across the yard ...'
Informant A - *The fox ran into the rake.*

In this instance the illustration acts as a sign for Leif to make the literal comment that the fox had run into the rake.

*A rake. He's going to jump on it. GONG. He went GONG.*

On this occasion Leif is 'living through' the experience, totally involved in the chase. His choice of language matches the tempo of the illustration and effectively captures and conveys meaning as the rake whacks the fox in the head.


Sarah knows that the fox must have a sore nose after being hit by the rake and makes a text to life connection between what happened when she hurt her finger and what could therefore be done to help the fox.

*Him's going a fast stopping walk.*

In this interpretation, Sarah's language eloquently expresses the action in the illustration.

By adopting a semiotic perspective, the responses of each informant can be accorded the significance they deserve as totally appropriate and insightful responses to that page at that time. This theoretical framework allows us to perceive the emergent literacy learners' evolving strategies for meaning making as they transact with the author, illustrator and the experienced reader, and use their language and life experience to arrive at meaning.
PICTURE STORY BOOK READING: A TRANSACTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

As discussed fully in Chapter One, from a semiotic perspective reading is regarded as a transactional process, a process of interpretation which assumes each reader will develop individual interpretations through a negotiation of meaning between reader and writer. Rosenblatt (1978) states,

> through the medium of words, the text brings into the reader's consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. The special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and pre-occupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be duplicated combination determine his response to the particular contribution of the text

(pp. 30-31)

For the purposes of this study, Rosenblatt's interpretation has been widened to encompass the illustrations in concert with the written language, which she refers to as text.

Compelling evidence has emerged from the data to show that both the parents and the informants utilise a transactive approach to shared and independent reading and rereading of favourite picture story books. As shown in Chapter Four, both sets of parents consistently demonstrate ways of transacting with the author, illustrator, prior knowledge and other participants in the sharing to bring meaning to the books. They engage the children in a dialogue with each book, inviting them to predict outcomes, drawing their attention to the illustrations, linking past and current book and life experiences, demonstrating inferencing by thinking aloud, and making the books a lived through experience.
The informants use aspects of these demonstrations as well as generating other strategies for themselves based on signifying structures to make meaning as they too adopt a transactive approach to reading.

TRANSACTING WITH TEXT

Reflecting semiotic theory, text or, in this case, the picture story book is seen not as an object, but a potential where meaning is created through interaction which involves the reader’s prior knowledge, their purpose for reading and the sign complex formed by print, illustration and other communication systems in relation to situational context. When viewed from this perspective, the informants' search for meaning, and developing strategies for meaning making become evident and significant.

As reported previously by a number of researchers (White, 1954; Sulzby, 1987), we found that no two readings of the same book were ever completely identical as the informants brought added experience and knowing about life, literacy and language and their personal agenda to each encounter. Harste (1984) asserts:

"because literacy is an event rather than an act, a "perpetual firstness" (Peirce, 1931:58) is assured for the young as well as the more seasoned learned. With repeated encounters we can attend to new demonstrations using choice as a self-motivating and context capitalising strategy."

(p.184)

The data we collected consistently supported this view. Each book became a rich resource, a chance to revisit the same setting in its totality, armed with further knowledge through which to probe new possibilities in the illustrations and language. Within the rereadings, the informants' own strategies for meaning making gradually emerged
as they transacted with different aspects of the experience in self-generated learning.

TRANSACTING WITH THE EXPERIENCED READER

Initially, as shown in the first two sets of strategies in Chapter Four, both informants relied on the experienced reader to provide demonstrations of the contents of the book, both as frameworks for response and demonstrations of how and why readers read.

Even as they moved toward independence, the social nature of the experience remained important. The experienced reader filled the role of the responder to the informants' risk taking either to:

**confirm and extend an initiative**

1. Rosie went the yard
2. Rosie went that. She went the yard.
3. Yeh. She went walking the yard.

**provide a link between parts of a story and extend a response**

1. Tiny caterpillar
2. For food

**provide reassurance**

1. Pull it up
2. Good girl. So the old woman called...
1. One day a grand...
   um... Who is it?
   1. Grandma Tildy.

act as an appreciative audience

... Woman pulled the man and the man pulled the turnip. Aren't I good!
(Mother smiles)

respond to an innovation on the text

1. Rosie went home for dinner and had a hamburger and shake.
   2. No! Home in time for dinner.

1. Oh!

translate new language or concepts

1. Why?
   1. He's digging a hole
   2. So he can bury the the scrubbing brush.

These transactions support Woodward and Serebrin's (1988) description of parent child reading as a constant movement between readers. Each informant initially used these demonstrations to confirm and to generate their own responses and to ultimately develop their own meaning making strategies.

TRANSACTIONING WITH THE ILLUSTRATOR

As stated previously, illustrators play a vital constructive role in creating sign potentials in picture story books. It is the illustrator who provides the surface visual context against which the language is set and who decides what signs will be embedded in the illustrations to assist...
the reader in making meaning. Artist and author combine to create multiple sign potentials for the reader, whose access to the use of these sign potentials is determined by his history in life, language and literacy experience.

Frequently the children survey and discuss the illustrations before attempting to transact with the language of the book. Each child assumes intentionality on the part of the illustrator and expects the illustrations to provide meaning. In Hrushovsky's (1979) words they are 'interpreted as signs by understanders' (p.8) In a pictorial overview of Rosie's Walk, a tractor is shown beside the barn, but does not appear again in the story. Sarah puzzled on this omission for months before deciding that because it was tea time, 'the man must have put it away in the shed before Rosie went walking'. The tractor had to be accounted for as part of the story in a way that made sense.

Both informants constantly transact with the illustrator as they 'read the pictures' to bring meaning to the book. This reading goes beyond the surface features of the illustrations, as the children endeavour to transact with the illustrator by:

*inferring patterns that sign meaning*

Figure 14
M. The caterpillar ate through one ...
S. Piece of 1, 4, 5
M. 5?
S. 1, 2, 6, 11
M. Oh. Just one.
S. Just one.
M. One nice green leaf.
S. There’s 1 and 3.
M. Oh. The holes.

*using their own language to describe what is taking place or to instigate a dialogue with the illustrations*

Figure 15

Text: The black dog called the cat.

S. OK. Black dog called the cat and said ‘I get off a tree in a minute, a time. I have to get off the tree. I get off. So he got off.*
relating their own life experiences to aspects of illustration

Figure 16


drawing on other story language as a means of interpreting illustrations

Figure 17

Text: He played by the railway and got even dirtier.

S. Him went up the steps, across the bridge. Trippin' and trappin' across the bridge.
TRANSACTING WITH THE AUTHOR

During story sharing each set of parents consistently demonstrates ways of transacting with the writer, embedding the language and concepts of the book in the familiar language of conversation in an ongoing dialogue between them, the children and the book. In this way, they invite the children to join them in thinking like an author.

Thus, in the process of becoming readers, the children transform sign potentials. The surface written language serves as a potential which each child actively explores in sense making ways to arrive at a personal meaningful interpretation that holds significance for them and their network of meanings. In Dombey’s (1987) words, ‘they are learning to handle participation with an unseen and unheard participant, the author’ (p.140).

Because the children see the surface written language as an open potential for meaning making, they expect to transact with any and every aspect of meaning potential. They search for patterns in the author’s language at the lexical, syntactic and semantic level,

Text: 
Each peach, pear plum

I spy Tom Thumb.

Sarah’s text: 
Each peach, pear, plum

I spy Tom and Jerry.

Text: 
Under the beehives.

Leif’s text: 
Um. Across the beehives.

Mother: 
No. She didn’t go across the beehives.

Leif’s text: 
Um. Upon them.
Text: He was perfect. I kept him.

L. But why doesn't it say something here (points to puppy's basket which is the only one unlabelled).

predict outcomes between characters and events

Text: The cat called the mouse.

S. So the cat called a mice if he would help and he did.

ask questions

M. But when the old woman had gone, the gruel looked so good that the cat ate it all.

L. Mmm.

M. And the pot too.

L. Ooh. And what else?

draw inferences

L. He looks a bit sick.

M. Why. Why do you think he could be sick?

L. because he's got his hand poking out of his mouth.

M. Do you think something would have made him sick?

L. The jelly beans.

construct and test hypotheses

M. What flavour ice cream.

L. But. Maybe strawberry.

M. Hmm. But strawberry's usually pink.

L. Oh. Sausages.

M. Sausages. Have you ever heard of sausage flavoured ice cream?

L. Ha Ha.
and transform language and experiences in constant interaction with the author

L. Through the beehives.
M. Oh. She didn’t go through the beehives.
L. Across the beehives.
M. No! She didn’t go across the beehives.
L. Um. Upon them.
M. No. You’re teasing me.

S. Rosie went home in time for hamburger and a shake (reference to her favourite meal at ‘Hungry Jacks’).
M. Oh!
S. No! Home in time for dinner.

Their search is driven by the need to make sense of the experience in light of their own needs and experiences at that time and guided by the aspects that they select for signification in any instance.

Halliday (1980) argues that any language event provides language users with the opportunity to learn language, learn about language and learn through language. The language event of picture story book reading provides emergent literacy learners with the unique experience of a constant context against which to do this. The informants’ language reveals a wealth of learning over the period of data collection as they move from the initial labelling of key features to producing dialogue between characters, innovating on existing language, and transforming the books into plays and games. Every instance of language use is meaningful as the informants transact with the author to bring further language and meaning to the existing text.
TRANSACTING WITH THEIR OWN WORLD

As noted by other researchers (Dombey, 1989; Altwerger, et al., 1985; Cochran-Smith, 1984), linking aspects of the books to real life experience was constantly demonstrated by the experienced readers as a way of generating meaning. As the books became lived through experiences for the children, these personal transactions assisted in bringing meaning to existing written language as well as creating additional meaning. In the following example Sarah chooses to focus on the cupcake. She calls it a capercake (caterpillar cake) and sometimes her mother buys one for her when they have finished their shopping.

Figure 18

Text: One cupcake.

S. I'm going see. I'm going capercake, that capercake hey.

M. That's a capercake.
S. I like it capercake ... I get me's got capercake nice.

Cochran-Smith (1984) describes this as relevance in reading and asserts that the practice makes two important features of reading explicit, namely 'when one reads a book he or she must integrate all the information given' and 'the reading process requires that the reader makes inferences'. In picture story books, neither the text nor the pictures explicitly provide all the information that is needed. From a transactive perspective, the informants use the information provided together with their own world experience to make sense of the books.

Both informants freely use this strategy and did so from the outset. At the labelling stage, Sarah's favourite picture story book was 'Baby Dear', a book about the arrival of a new baby in a household. As she labelled items in the illustrations, she would first state what it was and then add information relevant to her life. Chair became Sarah's chair, slippers mummy's and so on as she related each item to her life situation. During the final stages of data collection, each informant transacted increasingly with the texts and their own world:

demonstrating inferencing by thinking out loud

Figure 19

S. Look, food.
M. Looking for food.
S. Yeh.
M. On Monday he ate through ...
S. When it was caterpillar time for dinner.
M. Pardon?
S. Look, food!
by using their own language to create dialogue between characters

One day a man came to her house. He was selling pets.
"Would you like to buy a canary bird?" asked the man.
"Very well," said Grandma Tildy. "But no elephants!"

Figure 20

Text: As in Figure 20 above.

S. The pet man came and said 'Would you like a bird?' Yes thanks but NO elephants.
OK. If there's only one left when I take all these away I give it to you if I got to hey.
by asking questions and adding their own descriptive language

Figure 21

Text: No text.

M. Look where he’s landed.
L. Where’s the trolley going?
M. Where do you think?
L. RRRR - Plonk!
M. Oh dear!
L. It hurt.

by using cultural knowledge

M. How do you know it’s a girl?
L. Because it’s got spotted pants.
M. Oh.
L. And that one’s a boy.
M. How do you know that?
L. Because he’s got blue pants on.

Clearly, each informant understood the need to integrate information and to make inferences based on what they perceived to be signifying features.
TRANSACTING WITH INTERTEXTUALITY

As described in Chapter Four, intertextuality became a powerful and pervasive tool, a limitless potential for meaning making as each informant brought aspects of texts created from past experiences to transact with new experiences. These intertextual links included:

*connections between real life and story situations*

As Sarah and Father dress in jeans and braces, she turns to her father and says: "We both like old man in Turnip book".

Figure 22
connections between real life and story language

Figure 23

Context. Family playing cards.

1st Player. I'll see you. What have you got?

2nd Player. Two pairs.

Sarah. (Looking at cards and relating language to "The Very Hungry Caterpillar"). No. No pears. No cappa.

connections between stories and drama

Figure 24

Leif. Let's play Mr. Gumpy. You be Mr. Gumpy in your boat and I'll be the rabbit. "May I come with you?"
connections between illustrations

This illustration in a new book, 'Ten in the bed' reminds Sarah of the illustration shown below, from a favourite picture story book 'The great big enormous turnip'. Acting on what she sees to be a sign, Sarah uses the language and language pattern from the known book to tell about the illustration.

*Hedgehog pulled Teddy, Teddy pulled Croc Croc pulled Zebra ...... They pulled and pulled.*

Figure 25

Figure 26
Intertextuality provides an ever increasing network of sign potentials for meaning making. As Harste et al. (1984) write:

The texts we create ... represent pieces of the world which for us have unity and contextual appropriateness and represent our attempts to orchestrate and honour available signs.

(p.170)

As such, it is clearly evident from the proceeding examples that intertextuality is a generative force in literacy learning.

The following table demonstrates one informant's use of intertextuality with the text "The Very Hungry Caterpillar".

**Table 2: Intertextuality as a Meaning Potential**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Billy Goats Gruff</th>
<th>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>still hungry too</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like it capercake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I get me's got capercake nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When it was caterpillar time for dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other one dies. Caterpillar dies. I'm going to get other ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egg on leaf looks like a little eye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappa built stick house.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. That coon house.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No two pears No cappa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRANSACTING WITH PRINT

At the conclusion of the study, each informant is beginning some overt transactions with the print in the picture story books. Each points to the title as they say the name of the book, and often point out that the title on the next page is the same as the one on the cover. If catch-cries or particular words are printed in a feature print, they point to them as they read. When they do begin to transact with the sign potential of print more extensively, each will bring a wealth of meaning making strategies to support this aspect of reading.

Although each of the preceding transactions have been discussed separately, in reality it would be impossible to separate one from the other as their sign potentials are mutually supportive of each other and the informants operate on them from this wholistic perspective.

DRAWING THE THREADS TOGETHER: A GROUNDED THEORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STORY READING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES RELATED TO THE PROCESS OF READING

Picture story book reading is a socio-semiotic process embedded within the wider context of home and community literacy events which provide support and take support from the experience. Each literacy event contains a number of signifying structures and demonstrations which combine to provide the potential for interpretation and signification by the learner. In each event, only some signifying structures and demonstrations are acted on, depending on the learner's prior knowledge and experience and his personal agenda at that time.

From the outset, the emergent literacy learner plays an active, significant role in the experience. Initially, the experienced reader
provides demonstrations of the process of reading and the content of books, and invites the learner's participation. The learner's response to these demonstrations and invitations is personal and selective as he transacts with the experienced reader and self-selected features of the book to initiate further demonstrations, and to obtain responses to his initiatives. His strategies for engagement are driven by the need to make personal sense of the experience and to gain ownership of the process.

Through repeated shared and independent experiences with favourite picture story books, the learner develops and refines strategies for meaning making which allow him to deepen and sustain his involvement and become increasingly independent. Each opportunity to return to a book allows him to confirm what he already knows, and to search for new signifying structures and unity across such structures. Increasingly, the learner becomes involved 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 using intertextuality for signification by linking aspects of past and current literacy events becomes evident.

While still using the experienced reader as a demonstrator and respondent, the emergent literacy learner moves towards ownership of the content and process of picture story book reading. He adopts new roles and shifts perspectives to become a listener, responder, initiator, co-reader, reader, actor, narrator, producer or any other role that suits his current agenda. He innovates on the books through dialogue and improvisations, moving freely between oral language and story language, and incorporates aspects of them into his everyday life and
language transactions. These responses to the books are usually social in nature as the learner tries them out on an audience, modifying them in response to the audience reaction. The concepts and language become part of the child as a lived through experience.

Thus the experience of picture story book reading provides the learner with a wide variety of demonstrations and signifying structures which combine to provide the potential for interpretation and signification. Through the experience, the emergent literacy learner develops meaning making strategies which are congruent with a transactional approach to reading.

My concluding chapter reviews my conclusions, discusses the implications of this study for teaching and learning, and reflects on future areas for study.
CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH AND TEACHING IMPLICATIONS
OF A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE
ON PICTURE STORY BOOK READING

INTRODUCTION
This study has examined both theoretically and practically, the consequences of viewing picture story book reading from a socio-semiotic perspective. It asserts that the emergent language learner is an active meaning maker who plays a significant role in the experience from the outset and who gradually through initial interaction with experienced language users and independent rereadings develops a variety of meaning making strategies for initiating, sustaining and deepening involvement, and finally taking ownership of the content of the picture story books and processes of reading, which are consistent with a transactional approach. The focus of all strategies is on meaning. It is important to note that at the conclusion of the study neither informant is reading from print, although both children are beginning to incorporate some features of print which they find to be personally meaningful into discussions about books. However, as described in the preceding chapter, they possess a wealth of knowledge about why people read and the strategies they use for meaning making during reading as well as the satisfaction and enjoyment that reading can bring. Clearly, the ability to read from print is preceded and supported by a great deal of knowledge concerning how and why print is used, and the motivation to use it for authentic, meaningful purposes.
A socio-semiotic view of picture story book reading asserts that:

* **picture story book reading is a social process** learned as part of the ongoing literacy events experienced in family life. Initially, readers provide emergent literacy learners with demonstrations of the purpose and process of reading, and involve them in the experience. From repeated shared and independent experiences with picture story book reading, learners utilise aspects of demonstrations for themselves and develop strategies for meaning making which eventually allow them to take ownership of the content of the stories and the process of reading;

* **picture story book reading is a transactive process**, a negotiation of meanings between reader, writer, illustrator and other readers, occurring in the context of time and space. It is a lived through experience. The text provided by the author and illustrator serves as a potential from which the emergent reader constructs a unique meaning based on his current world and language knowledge;

* **picture story book reading is an open potential**. The language and illustrations form potential messages or texts. In any given instance, only some aspects of the meaning potential are selected for signification and these are determined by the learner's purpose and personal history of experience and the context of use. Over time, the learners generate a multiplicity of interpretations within each book;
the focus on picture story book reading is on meaning. Reading is learned through the active, personal and interpretative response to a text by a reader;

picture story book reading is facilitated by the strategy of intertextuality, a strategy which makes use of past texts in the interpretation of current texts.

This study was initially prompted by my concern for inconsistencies in theoretical beliefs understandings and consequently in the ways shared books were used in early childhood classrooms.

Analysis of the data provides significant insights concerning the strategies emergent literacy learners develop for meaning making from the experience of picture story book reading. It also illuminates the social contexts which generate and offer support for the development of these strategies, and the conditions which invite children to investigate how and why literacy is used and to attempt to use it for the achievement of their own purposes. These insights, which are fully described and discussed in Chapters Four and Five, furnish valuable understandings for the selection and use of shared books, which are in accord with a whole language approach to teaching and learning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING
THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW LEARNERS LEARN AND TO RESPECT THEIR KNOWING

Teachers can only support continued literacy learning by developing sound theoretical understandings concerning literacy learning and literacy learners. Beliefs about the use of shared books in the literacy
program must be consistent with the beliefs upon which the whole program is premised.

Data from this study consistently shows the informants to be active and able learners acting on demonstrations of literacy use and the meaning making potentials of significant signs used by members of their social group, to learn about literacy and to incorporate literacy in purposeful ways into their own lives. Teachers can offer support for continued literacy learning by understanding, acknowledging and respecting children as learners and offering thoughtful informed responses to their meaning making attempts.

Children must be encouraged to explore shared books from a variety of perspectives, to take risks to create meaning, and to take responsibility and gain eventual control of this part of language learning in the manner in which they assumed responsibility and ownership for oral language learning.

THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL NATURE OF LEARNING

The social nature of literacy learning has been demonstrated and discussed in previous chapters of this study, and it is argued that emergent literacy learners act on contexts, the acts and artefacts that occur within these contexts, and the people they encounter in these contexts in a transactive relationship, devising strategies to allow them to use literacy for their own purposes. 'It is a complex process, full of challenge, response and consummation, and inextricably interwoven with everything else that is going on. It is thinking and acting on the run' (Holdaway, 1989:10).
Because picture story book reading is a transactive process drawing on contextual elements to provide meaning, it is extremely important that not only are shared books an integral part of the overall literacy program but a social event that ensures collaborative learning situations which invite the children's responses concerning their interpretations and their meaning making strategies. These collaborative sharings allow the teacher to use shared books to demonstrate reading strategies as a member of the interpretative community and to engage the children at whatever level they feel comfortable to contribute. Thus the unique responses of individuals can also be shared creating a semiotic data pool of what Cambourne (1989) terms 'metatextual awareness' as children think aloud and make overt to their classmates their thinking and their strategies, thereby providing a variety of routes to meaning making. Meaning is not something that can be extracted, it is an experience that one has in the course of reading. Collaborative experiences provide the opportunity for such experience, a shared living through of the book.

Collaborative experiences with shared books must extend beyond immediate linguistic and literacy orientated responses to enable each child's voice to be heard. Some shared books will lend themselves naturally to other interpretations through art, music or drama, while others may lead to the search for books which have similar plots, characters or structures. In this way, both children and teachers can utilise the potential of societies sign systems for meaning making as literacy takes its place in an integrated curriculum.
THE NEED FOR REREADING AND REFLECTION

Evidence from this and other studies which have investigated repeated rereadings of favourite picture story books (Sulzby, 1987; White, 1954; Martinez, 1985; Teale and Sulzby, 1984) support Harste’s (1984) assertion that ‘Through repeated encounters children can attend to other demonstrations available in the event and deepen their personal understanding’ (p.125). For shared books to reach their potential to demonstrate how and why readers read and to engage learners in the process in enjoyable and meaningful ways, children need the opportunity to repeatedly engage with them over time in order to bring their growing cognitive, linguistic and world knowledge to their interpretations. Each opportunity to revisit the books provide the emergent literacy learner with the opportunity not only to confirm and maintain meaning but to generate new meaning.

The children require shared and independent opportunities to read and reflect, compare and contrast and to experiment with the fittingness of other language and concepts as they innovate on the books to create new versions. Only with time can learners fully utilise the powerful meaning making strategy of intertextuality as they make links between characters, language, plots, story structures, illustrative features and styles, and their life and language experiences to arrive at meaning and to generate further meaning.

Learners also need the opportunity to read for a variety of purposes. Rereading a book for a particular purpose such as thinking like the author and considering why the author chose a particular topic or chose specific language to convey the message, or alternatively, to consider what suggestions or instructions the author may have given the
illustrator, demonstrate ways of taking new perspectives on familiar materials. In this way reading continues to be demonstrated as a thinking transactive process, an open potential in which the readers play an active role.

THE NEED TO PLAN CONTEXTS FOR LEARNING

Other than the children themselves, the most vital element of a program based on shared books is the learning context. Contexts determine the authentic forms and functions of language that children encounter, see demonstrated, and engage in for themselves as they take on the roles inherent in each context. The data collected during this study shows emergent literacy learners consistently responding through appropriate text to various contexts. Teachers who use shared books within contexts which relate to their overall meaning provide learners with the potential to explore the books from a variety of perspectives which, in turn, generate a variety of demonstrations of literacy use and the opportunity to engage in it. As the context is developed, displays of the murals, paintings, writing and so on that the children create as they work through shared and independent activities become part of the classroom environment and add support to the concepts underlying the overall context. In semiotic terms they become signifying features, a multiplicity of sign potentials for meaning making.

As the informants in this study have been repeatedly shown to use intertextuality as a meaning making strategy, the implications for planning contexts suggest the importance of providing some continuity of contexts to allow children to make links between learning in one to learning in another. These connections can be made by keeping some features of contexts constant, by demonstrating the relationships between familiar and new shared books, and inviting children to share
what they perceive to be relationships by ensuring connections between the range of forms and functions of language demonstrated and engaged in. In this way, contexts become inter-related ‘webs of possibilities’ for meaning making, webs that the learner can traverse in many different ways in the constant orchestration and re-orchestration of meaning potentials.

THE NEED TO UTILISE A RANGE OF SHARED BOOKS
The two informants involved in this study demonstrated a wide range of responses during rereadings of favourite picture story books. They lingered over new, unusual or particularly evocative words and phrases, and frequently incorporated them into their daily lives; they played with the sounds and rhythms of rhyming words; quickly learned chants and catch-cries off by heart and claimed them for their own; looked for signifying patterns in the written language and illustrations as they transacted with author and illustrator; predicted outcomes; tried out alternative language and concepts as books became well known; and interpreted and transformed the concepts through role play, art, music and drama. In short, they demonstrated what Holdaway termed ‘joyous familiarity’ (p.71).

In selecting shared books to use in the literacy program teachers need to consider the range of possible responses their children might make to each one. They need to choose a variety of quality books in which the author’s and illustrator’s work complement each other, and together provide layers of meaning potential to invite repeated shared and independent rereadings. Such books demonstrate multiple ways of transacting with text in meaningful ways, and engage the children in the
process by providing a range of opportunities for transactions to take place from a variety of perspectives.

Consideration must also be given to the range of other responses shared books evoke. As Goodman (1989) asserts, 'Since we think symbolically, human learning is not complete until it has been represented in some presentation form' (p.16). Choices which lend themselves to innovation to produce a new book or to art, drama, mime and music through true reader response, all play their part in ensuring the children develop ownership of the language and concepts as well as ownership of ways of thinking about reading.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The basic research implications of adopting a socio-semiotic perspective on picture story book reading have already been argued with regard to the design of this study. They are in brief:

* since picture story book reading is seen as a social experience, it is necessary to be studied in relation to the wider context of social literacy learning;

* literacy learning is regarded as an open potential, therefore all signifying features that emergent literacy learners utilise in their search for meaning and the ways in which they are utilised need to be considered;

* emergent literacy learners are active meaning makers and there exists the need to discover their meaning making strategies by studying picture story book reading from their perspective;
research which fragments the systems of language and attempts to examine them under controlled conditions is likely to yield distorted and incomplete results.

Although this study has attempted to identify and explore what are believed to be key strategies used by emergent literacy learners to make meaning from the experience of shared and independent rereadings of favourite picture story books, the picture is as yet far from complete. Future naturalistic research in home and community settings is needed to investigate whether or not or to what extent the strategies for meaning making, developed from the experience of shared and independent picture story book reading and social literacy use identified in this study, are characteristic of other social and cultural groups in the community.

The ethnographic work of Heath (1983) has shown that reading is a way of taking from a culture, and ways of taking vary in different social contexts. Naturalistic research from a semiotic perspective could shed new light on some of the commonplace social literacy transactions that take place almost unnoticed in the everyday lives of pre-school children. There are many kinds of emergent literacies and children are literate in many observable ways before coming to school. There is a need to discover what these emergent literacies are, and the contexts and conditions which have nurtured and guided their development to ensure these literacies and the conditions can be acknowledged, respected and acted on when the learners enter our classrooms.

Since from an educational perspective the aim of research is to develop better understandings of the ways in which we might best facilitate
learning in classrooms, there is a need also for research in relation to the use of shared books in classroom situations.

As recognised by Meek (1983), it is highly desirable to involve teachers in this research.

Until recently the kinds of evidence for children's language development that teachers have been encouraged to look at have been constrained by the concerns of academic experts. But lately there are signs that teachers are confident and knowledgeable enough to present new kinds of evidence and to enter the debates about the ways in which language intermeshes with the structures of biological growth, the development of ways and means of knowing and feeling, and the child's view of the world. Teachers are becoming their own experts.

(Talk workshop group, 1982)

In the natural settings of their own classrooms, teachers can observe and document the processes of teaching and learning from shared books in the role of participant observers. Consideration of all aspects of the teaching learning situation which influence the experience could provide valuable insights from a classroom perspective.

One of the contributing factors inhibiting educational change has been 'the failure to involve practitioners in any but a consuming role' (Oakes, Hare and Sirotnik, 1986). When teachers are involved in research in their own classrooms, involving their own children, it is likely that their teaching will become transformed as they combine the stances of theorists responsible for the articulation of theory and ways of collecting and analysing data, and practitioners responsible for using the results of their data in ways that facilitate learning. In turn, this could affect their ability to respond to the research of others, and to their assessment of curriculum, methodology and resources.
CONCLUSION

The practice of reading to young children from picture story books in the belief that this is an important contributing factor to later success in reading is an entrenched feature of classroom practice, particularly in early childhood settings. The use of shared books which builds on and extends this practice as a strategy for demonstrating reading to emergent literacy learners, as well as engaging them in reading whereby they learn to read by reading, is gaining widespread support in the teaching community.

This study provides further support for research cited in earlier chapters (Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Dombey, 1988; Mills, 1988) which consistently shows emergent literacy learners to be active and resourceful learners making use of signifying structures from a variety of sources in the constant quest to bring meaning to their world. It has demonstrated that in the process of meaning making from the experience of shared and independent rereading of picture story books emergent literacy learners transact with the experienced reader, the author and illustrator, prior knowledge, past and current book and social literacy experiences using a range of social, linguistic and cognitive strategies.

From a socio-semiotic perspective, the full potential of shared books can only be realised for both learners and teachers when they are used in wholistic teaching learning contexts which support and extend their use as part of an integrated curriculum. Children should be given the opportunity to transact with every aspect of the shared books that have been shown to contribute to meaning making in collaborative and independent reading situations which emulate the contexts, conditions
and practices of social literacy learning. There must be time for rereading and reflection to allow learners to bring new insights to familiar materials. In this way, the young learners will eventually gain ownership of the purposes and processes of reading in the same way as they gained ownership of oral language, and teachers will learn a great deal about the ways emergent literacy learners develop meaning making strategies. Each will learn from the other, and be enriched by the experience.

A LANGUAGE STORY

Yesterday evening Sarah and her two year old sister were visiting me and requested a story. Among our selections were The Great Big Enormous Turnip and Where's Spot? Sarah responded to Turnip with joyous familiarity, quickly taking over the reading and adding further dialogue for each character. When we had finished, their Mother came into the room and began to talk with me so Sarah began to share Spot with her sister.

S. Look Emmy. Look at the picture. That's Spot. OK?
Mmm. Spotty. He's looking for his Mother.

E. Why?

S. 'Cos he likes his Mother. See Emma? (Pointing to the illustration.) He looks for his Mother. (Sarah points to a flap on the page.) Is she in there? (She lifts up the flap and looks at the picture.) No. There's a bear in there. Look Em. A bear. Say bear.

E. Bear.

Sarah continues in this manner for several pages and Emma begins to lose interest.
S. What's this one? (Lifts the flap.)
E. Don't know.
S. It's not Spot. What is it?
E. I don't know.
S. THINK. What is it? What is it?
You've got to THINK when you read Em!

Sarah has not yet started school, but from her experience with social literacy and picture story books, she fully understands and can articulate the essence of reading. It is to be hoped her future teachers share this knowledge.
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APPENDIX ONE

Informant A

Text:  

Context: Leif and mother in the kitchen. His mother is making lunch and Leif is reading to her.

M.  O.K.
L.  I'm going back to the beginning.
M.  Alright.
L.  Um, the beginning in where there's no picture.
M.  Right.
L.  I'm going to do it very slowly this time.
M.  That's good, 'cos I'll understand you better.
L.  There's a tractor there.
M.  Yes.
L.  Look, tractor.
M.  Mm.
L.  And Rosie's in her house.
M.  Yes.
L.  And um, there are the beehives, bees sting.
M.  Ahem.
L.  The fox is under there, I think he is going to chase Rosie.
M.  Is he?
L.  Yeh.
M.  And what does it say? Are you going to read it for me?
L.  Um.
M.  Are you going to read me what it says?
L. Oh, what does that say?
M. Well, you know.
L. Past the garden.
M. No ... across.
L. The yard.
M. Across the yard, yeh.
L. Walk across the yard. Boing!!! (laughs).
M. What's happened?
L. (laughs babble).
M. The fox what?
L. (more babble laughter)
M. The fox bumped into the rake?
L. Yeh.
M. Mm.
L. Splash!
M. I think you skipped a page, yes you did too.
L. Around the pond, but I think this, I think that that.
M. Mm.
L. Fox is going to jump into the pond.
M. Do you?
L. Mm. Splash and the bird is flying right away.
M. Yes.
L. 'Cos he didn't want to get wet by spock, by um the fox did he?
M. No. My these pages are hard to turn aren't they?
L. Over the hayo ... cock, is it a haycock?
M. Yes.
L. Over the haycock.
M. Some people say haystack but it says haycock in that book.
L. Haycock.
L. But the fox is stuck in the haycock.
M. Yes.
L. Rosie got tied up by the windmill.
M. Yes, do you know what it says up there?
L. What?
M. Look, what those words?
L. Past the windmill.
M. Past the mill, yeh.
L. Past the mill, but she, but she can’t go past the mill because look she’s hooked up.
M. Oh I think that’s just a little, think it’s just tied loosely around her legs.
L. Yeh, there’s not much of the haycock.
M. No.
L. Why?
M. Why do you think it’s like that?
L. Because the fox.
M. Mm, squashed it didn’t he?
L. Mm. Oh dear, the flour’s coming all out.
M. And where’s it going when it’s coming out?
L. All onto the fox. He can’t chase Rosie.
M. No.
L. He’s not worried about St. Marks. (? not sure).
M. No.
L. Mummy?
M. Mm, what’s the matter.
L. Over, through the fence.
M. Yes.
L. Did she make a hole in the fence?
M. Well I think that little hole might have been there.
L. Oh.
M. Maybe it's a bit like our back fence with bits falling off it.
L. What did you say mum?
M. Maybe it's a bit like our back fence where there are bits falling off it, and there's just enough room for Rosie to go through.
L. The fox is going over.
M. Yes. Do you think you could fit through that little hole?
L. No. He might land into the trolley.
M. Yes. He might too.
L. Are they trolleys?
M. Yes.
L. Oh, but what's that one got on it?
M. Corn, that says corn. C.O.R.N. and that one says corn, C.O.R.N. and that one says?
L. Corn.
M. Mm and that one says?
L. Corn.
M. Yes.
L. But that one hasn't got anything written on it.
M. No, it hasn't got any bags in it has it?
L. No, the fox landed into one of the trolleys and is going down, down, down.
M. Oh, I think you skipped a page.
L. Oh.
M. There you are.
L. The fox ... BANG!
M. Yes.
L. Right into the beehives.
M. And what does this say, that tells you where Rosie went?
L. Through the beehives.
M. Oh, she didn't go through the beehives.
L. Um. Across the beehives.
M. No, she didn't go across the beehives (laughs).
L. Um, upon them.
M. Upon them? No, she didn't go upon them either. You're teasing me.
L. You tell me.
M. What do you think, where did she go?
L. Under them.
M. Yes, under the beehives.
L. Under the beehives, um the bees are chasing the fox because they didn't want them to come on to BANG BANG into the beehives:
M. That's right.
L. And got back home to have tea.
M. Oh right, she got back in time for dinner didn't she?
L. She got back in time for dinner.
M. I like Rosie's Walk.
L. Me too. There's a bit of, um, the haycock on it.
M. Is there?
L. Inside Rosie's Walk, Rosie's house, there's a bit of the haycock.
M. Yes, I think that's what Rosie sleeps on, don't you?
L. Yes. Rosie sleeps on.
M. Any maybe she scratches around and makes a little nest in it.
L. But mummy, mummy, mummy, you ...
APPENDIX TWO

Informant B

Text: *Harry the Dirty Dog*

Context: Sarah and her mother sitting on the lounge in the family room where Sarah has brought several books ready for a story. Sarah selects 'Harry the Dirty Dog' and gives her mother 'Mr. Gumpy's Outing' to read. She wants her mother nearby to act as a responder, but continually asserts her independence by insisting her mother reads her own book while she reads 'Harry'.

S. You read mum.
M. O.K. You going to read to me?
S. No. I read Harry dog.
M. Alright then.
S. You read. You read that first and then you: after Sarah finishes this Harry dog you can finish this (hands mother Mr. Gumpy and takes Harry herself).
M. Mm.
S. Mr. Gumpy and Harry goes in bath. He's not in bath.
M. He's not in the bath.
S. No. Him got to go in bath.
M. Mm.
S. Him's in bathtub. Soon after he goes in bathtub him's got scrubbing brush and him's going in bath and got scrubbing brush and don't want to go in tub tub.
M. Doesn't want to go in the tub.
S. No, don't want to go in tub tub. Oh this way, this way. When a Harry push a pram and man push a pram and dog pram him's see the pram with dollys in there.
M. Oh yeh.
S. Cars and kittens and kittens.
M. Kittens? Oh little kittens.
S. Yep. Kitten, kitten 1, 2, 4, 5.
M. All of them.
S. All, yeh.
M. Oh.
S. 5, 6, 11, 5. So something walks and bird, bird comes down in tree and there's butterfly and bird.
M. Is it?
S. Butterfly and
M. Oh yeh. I see, in the tree.
S. Yeh.
M. And what's Harry doing with the scrubbing brush?
S. Putting it in here going in hole.
M. He's burying it in the hole?
S. Yeh.
M. Mmm. Why?
S. Because .... what's him doing in there?
M. He's digging a hole.
S. Why?
M. So he can bury the scrubbing brush.
S. Oh.
M. Because he doesn't want to have a bath.
S. Why?
M. He doesn't like having a bath.
S. Cos him not going to have bath?
M. Mmm.
S. Him's all dirty.
M. That's right, but he doesn't want to.
S.  Him's all, like Sarah did.
M.  He's naughty, yeh.
S.  Him's naughty.
M.  Mmm.
S.  Why him's naughty for?
M.  Because he won't have a bath.
S.  Cos him have a bath soon.
M.  Yeh.
S.  Why him's going to have bath soon?
M.  Yeh.
S.  Cos him's got to have a bath.
M.  Mmm and what happens next?
S.  Harry, Harry's got to have this bath.
M.  He's running away from home.
S.  Yeh.
M.  Because he doesn't want to have a bath.
S.  Why him's going to have bath now?
M.  Pardon?
S.  Him's going to have bath when he gets home.
M.  When he gets home.
S.  Yeh.
M.  Oh, and where's he going first?
S.  He's going to go shopping first.
M.  He's going shopping.
S.  Yeh.
M.  Is he?
S.  Yep.
M.  Mmm.
S.  And he can go and get a scrubbing brush.
M.  Oh.
S.  And he can get a yummy (a treat) and he can play all dogs and him's get all dirty.
M.  Mmm.  He's playing in the street.
S.  Yep, him's naughty boy.
M.  Yeh, getting all dirty.
S.  Yeh, naughty, clean him up and he sit on choo train, him's get all dirty again.
M.  Yeh.
S.  Him's sit on choo train, man's going to go down to stairs on train.
M.  Pardon?
S.  That, this man go down stairs and go choo train.
M  Mmm.
S.  And going to go home.
M.  Is he?
S.  Downstairs him going away. Up, down, up and down in choo train.
M.  Where's Harry?
S.  Where - um, here. He's getting all dirty.
M.  Oh. Getting all dirty near the train.
S.  Yeh.
M.  Dear oh dear.
S.  Him going to get on choo train, sit on choo train.
M.  Yeh.
S.  You read Mr. Gumpy please.
M.  Yeh, I'm reading Mr. Gumpy.
S.  You're not.
M.  Oh sorry!
S.  Harry dog play good time in this way.
M.  Mmm. He's playing with other dogs isn't he?
S. Mmm.
S. He likes um playing other dogs. Oh man's there, getting there. Mum, can't go there mum.
M. Why?
S. Cos the man's there.
M. Where?
S. Here, over here making mess.
M. Oh, the kids playing in the park over there.
S. Yeh.
M. Yeh, where the men. Oh the men are building, that's men building a house.
S. Yeh.
M. Yeh and the dogs are playing.
S. Yeh.
M. They're having a nice time aren't they?
S. Yeh, them want play over here.
M. Mmm.
S. In that - play here?
M. Pipes.
S. Pipes, yeh. READ.
M. I'm reading. I'm reading Mr. Gumpy. It's a nice story.
S. When them's get all dirty, when them gets all dirty now in the coal.
M. In the coal chute, coal.
S. In coal chute.
M. Yeh.
S. And see car
M. Yeh.
S. And coal stop it and body (everybody) was stopped in car and light, and green light comes I stopped.
M. No, the green light comes we go. When the red light comes we stop.
S. Yeh, cos we go and we can stop. We can go on road or we can stop.
M. Yeh.
S. And this good story.
M. Mmm.
S. You reading Gumpy?
M. I'm sorry, I'm reading Mr. Gumpy. I'm not looking at you.
S. When Harry gets all dirty he wants to go home.
M. Does he?
S. Yeh and the choo train will come. Comes here and Harry seen the man go up here.
M. Up the ladder, yeh.
S. Pardon?
M. The man's going up the ladder.
S. Why?
M. Because he wants to get to the top.
S. Oh, why hims want to go top?
M. I don't know.
S. He wants go top.
M. Mmm. Is Harry going home now, is he?
S. Yep.
M. Oh.
S. And this is Harry. Him's crying.
M. Oh.
S. Can want.
M. Is he sad?
S. Yeh.
M. Why?
S. Him's not sad. Sarah show you.

M. O.K. Oh he's happy again.

(Sarah goes forward a couple of pages.)

S. Yeh.

M. What's he doing?

S. Playing. Two Harry dogs. Him's see this is crying he has, he is crying, this is.

M. He's dancing, Oh.

S. See this is. Have to go around, around, around.

M. (laugh)

S. Has go round a round.

M. You going back again? (Sarah turns back to look at previous pages.)

S. Pardon?

M. Why are you going back again?

S. I just putting him over this way.

M. Oh.

S. And Sarah can read, when and when Harry goes down and Luke was coming.

M. Mmm.

S. And the Luke was come.

M. The Luke comes?

S. Yeh, Luke comes all the kids. (Reference to a friend coming to a party where the children dance on in Sarah's words 'Go round and round'.)

M. Oh, Harry's dancing again.

S. Yeh, Harry's not dancing again. He's crying.

M. He's not crying, he's happy.

S. This is crying.

M. Oh?

S. That's crying.
M.  Oh, that's crying down there.
S.  Yeh.
M.  Oh.
S.  Him wants him's mother.
M.  Wants his mother does he?
S.  Him's goes him's mother here.
M.  Mmm.
S.  And him's crying again.
M.  He's singing.
S.  And him's dancing again.
M.  Mmm.
S.  He's not singing.
M.  Oh, sorry.
S.  He's just dancing.
M.  Just dancing.
S.  Yeh, him's just singing and, and him get home.
M.  Mmm.
S.  And go get home and go round here and round and round and round and went home. Him went home.
M.  Mmm.
S.  And him went home in hole and come down.
M.  What's he doing with the hole? Is he digging a hole?
S.  No, he's not digging hole, him's Harry's in there, that's one hole in there.
M.  Is it?
S.  And him go down him downstairs and get the scrubbing brush over here up there and go back here.
M.  And what's he got over here?
S.  Scrubbing brush.
M.  He's found the scrubbing brush?
S.  Yeh.
M.  Oh.
S.  He won’t cried.
M.  What’s he going to do with it?
S.  Put over here. Up downstairs.
M.  Taking it upstairs?
S.  Yeh.
M.  Why?
S.  Cos he like it downstairs.
M.  Oh.
S.  And him’s, here’s him in bath now.
M.  Oh, finally got him in the bath.
S.  Yeh and he was too big and try and go in bath.
M.  Did he have a nice bath?
S.  Yeh, he was crying, him’s crying in the bath.
M.  In the bath?
S.  Yeh.
M.  Oh.
S.  He want mummy.
M.  (laugh)
S.  — Him’s sleeping.
M.  — That was beautiful Sarah.