

Apprentissage de la notion de sujet en 1^{re} secondaire: mise à l'essai d'une méthode d'enseignement inductif

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Résumé

L'article exposera les résultats d'une recherche dont l'objectif est de décrire les effets d'un enseignement inductif suivant la méthode de la médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages sur la performance d'élèves de 1^{re} secondaire à identifier le sujet grammatical. Un devis quasi-expérimental (avec prétest et posttests) permet de constater que les élèves du groupe expérimental améliorent davantage que les élèves du groupe témoin leur performance à identifier le sujet dans la phrase. Les résultats suggèrent notamment l'importance d'un enseignement qui s'ajuste constamment aux connaissances antérieures exprimées par les élèves.

Mots-clés

Apprentissage, enseignement inductif, connaissances antérieures, grammaire, sujet, médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages

Introduction

Des recherches récentes en didactique du français soulèvent l'importance d'accéder aux connaissances antérieures des élèves pour favoriser leurs apprentissages (par exemple, Gauvin et Boivin, 2013; Gauvin, 2011; Nadeau et Fisher, 2006). D'autres recherches, portant sur les pratiques enseignantes, suggèrent que l'enseignement actuel de la grammaire ne permet pas la prise en compte de ces connaissances qu'ont construites les élèves (par exemple, Lord, 2012; Nadeau et Fisher 2006) ainsi que le permettraient, par exemple, les démarches d'enseignement inductif (par exemple, Barth 2013a; Nadeau et Fisher, 2006; Chartrand 1995) où les élèves sont appelés à observer des phénomènes grammaticaux, à proposer, à vérifier et à valider des hypothèses dans le but de formuler une règle ou les caractéristiques d'une notion. À ce jour, peu de recherches empiriques ont été menées sur de telles démarches en didactique de la grammaire, notamment sur la méthode de la médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages proposée par Barth (2013a, 2013b, 2004). Cette méthode suppose un enseignement qui s'appuie sur les connaissances des élèves, et ce, tout au long de la séquence didactique.

Cet article présentera les effets d'une intervention didactique basée sur la méthode de la médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages pour l'enseignement d'une notion grammaticale qui, selon une étude québécoise récente, ne semble toujours pas maîtrisée par les élèves de 1^{re} secondaire : le sujet¹.

Après avoir décrit le contexte dans lequel s'inscrivent nos travaux, nous présenterons la méthodologie adoptée pour la collecte et l'analyse des données. Par la suite, des résultats seront présentés et discutés.

Contexte

Définition de la notion de sujet

Plusieurs caractéristiques pour définir la notion de sujet sont présentées dans les grammaires influentes en didactique de la grammaire (par exemple, Chartrand, Aubin, Blain et Simard, 2011 ; Riegel, Pellat et Rioul, 2009 ; Boivin et Pinsonneault, 2008). Ces caractéristiques ne s'avèrent toutefois pas toujours exclusives à cette notion. Par exemple, il est vrai que le sujet est un constituant obligatoire de la phrase de base et qu'il ne peut donc pas en être effacé (*La grammaire est fascinante* \Rightarrow *[] *est fascinante*)ⁱⁱ ; toutefois, ceci est également vrai pour l'autre constituant de la phrase de base, soit le prédicat (**La grammaire* []). Ainsi, le non-effacement du sujet ne permet pas de discriminer le sujet du prédicat, par exemple. La définition que nous proposons ne porte que sur les caractéristiques qui décrivent exclusivement le sujet (tableau 1). Ces caractéristiques sont d'ordre syntaxique et morphosyntaxique, conformément aux descriptions de la grammaire pédagogique moderne dont l'enseignement est prescrit dans les programmes de formation (MELS, 2011, 2009, 2006, 2001).

Tableau 1

Définition du sujet

Caractéristiques	Exemples Sous les feuilles se cache [un mulot]. (sujet entre crochets)
Le sujet est le premier constituant de la phrase de base (occupe la position initiale dans la phrase de base)	\Rightarrow [Un mulot] se cache sous les feuilles. \Rightarrow Sous les feuilles se cache [un mulot].
Il peut être encadré par <i>c'est... qui</i> lorsqu'il est dans sa position de base	\Rightarrow C'est [un mulot] qui se cache sous les feuilles.
Il peut être remplacé par les pronoms <i>il, ils, elle, elles, ce, cela</i> , <i>ça</i> lorsqu'il est dans sa position de base	\Rightarrow [Il] se cache sous les feuilles.
Il régit l'accord du verbe, de l'attribut du sujet et du participe passé employé avec l'auxiliaire <i>être</i>	Le sujet [un mulot] commande les marques de la 3 ^e personne du singulier au verbe, soit la terminaison <i>-e</i> pour le verbe <i>se cacher</i> .

Connaissances des élèves sur la notion de sujet au début du secondaire

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, de rares travaux ont porté sur les connaissances des élèves sur la notion de sujet. En France, Brissaud et Cogis (2004; 2002) constatent que les élèves de fin primaire ont une connaissance très imprécise du sujet. L'identification du sujet par des élèves de CM2 (10-11 ans) repose principalement sur trois critères : sa position préverbale dans la phrase (c.-à-d. qu'il précède immédiatement le verbe), sa réalisation en nom ou en pronom et ses marques de genre, de nombre et de personne (Brissaud et Cogis, 2002). Dès la fin du cycle élémentaire, les élèves commencent à considérer le sujet comme un élément « qui gouverne le verbe » (Brissaud et Cogis, 2004, p. 251). Au CM2, certains viendront à chercher « l'actant le plus saillant » (p. 254) ou utiliseront certains tests linguistiques (le remplacement par un pronom, par exemple). Ces travaux suggèrent que les critères sur lesquels semblent s'appuyer les élèves du primaire pour

identifier le sujet concernant notamment sa position dans la phrase, sa réalisation ainsi que son trait sémantique « animé ».

Au Québec, Gauvin (2011) observe que des élèves de 1^{re} secondaire (12-13 ans) identifient le sujet seulement une fois sur deux environ après l'enseignement de la notion. Les interactions verbales des élèves lors de l'enseignement dévoilent qu'ils mobilisent un grand nombre de connaissances pour faire l'identification du sujet. Gauvin (2011) qualifie certaines de ces connaissances de marginales, car elles s'avèrent non conformes aux savoirs à enseigner tels que présentés dans les grammaires pédagogiques modernes (Chartrand et *al.*, 2011 ; Boivin et Pinsonneault, 2008) ou les programmes ministériels (MELS, 2011, 2009, 2006, 2001). Ces connaissances marginales sont exactes (par exemple, le sujet peut être après le verbe), partiellement exactes (par exemple, les pronoms *je, tu, il, nous, vous, ils* sont sujets) ou, encore, inexactes (par exemple, il y a un déterminant devant le sujet).

Ainsi, à leur arrivée en 1^{re} secondaire, les élèves ont déjà construit des connaissances variées à propos de la notion de sujet, connaissances dont certaines s'avèrent assez peu opérationnelles : l'identification du sujet repose notamment sur des connaissances procédurales (surtout après l'enseignement de la notion), mais souvent utilisées à l'extérieur de la phrase et sur certaines connaissances marginales, procédurales ou déclaratives, qui reposent, pour l'essentiel, sur la réalisation et la position du sujet. Dans ce contexte, il importe que l'enseignement de cette notion repose sur ces connaissances antérieures des élèves dans une perspective de déconstruction et de reconstruction (Gauvin et Boivin, 2013).

Place des connaissances antérieures dans l'enseignement grammatical

Dans une perspective cognitive, l'apprentissage exige que les nouvelles connaissances soient mises en relation avec les connaissances antérieures stockées dans la mémoire à long terme de l'élève; l'enseignement doit ainsi favoriser leur rencontre (Tardif, 1992). Or, il semble que l'enseignement grammatical effectif ne favorise pas la prise en compte des connaissances grammaticales antérieures des élèves.

En effet, dans une récente étude portant sur les pratiques d'enseignement de la grammaire au Québec, Lord (2012) ⁱⁱⁱ constate notamment que l'enseignement de la grammaire est essentiellement transmissif. Il se caractérise par des leçons magistrales où les apprentissages relatifs à une notion grammaticale sont organisés à l'avance pour les élèves, autour de la présentation de la règle, suivie d'exemples, et où le discours de l'enseignant est nettement prépondérant. Nadeau et Fisher (2006) affirment que les leçons de grammaire, suivies d'exercices d'application décontextualisés et peu variés, ne permettent pas (ou très peu) aux élèves d'exprimer leurs connaissances antérieures en cours d'apprentissage. Dans ce contexte, l'enseignant ne peut réellement tenir compte des connaissances antérieures des élèves et ainsi intervenir sur elles (Nadeau et Fisher, 2006; Chartrand, 1995).

Par conséquent, l'enseignement d'une notion dont certains aspects ont déjà été vus au préalable, comme c'est le cas pour la notion de sujet en 1^{re} secondaire, consiste bien souvent à reprendre la notion du début sans égard pour ce que les élèves en savent réellement. Le fait de réellement tenir compte des connaissances antérieures des élèves permettrait pourtant à l'enseignant de prendre chacune de ces connaissances, exacte, partiellement exacte ou inexacte, comme point de départ d'une prochaine action didactique, et ce, tout au long de l'enseignement. C'est ce que permet notamment la médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages de Barth (2013a, 2013b, 2004).

La médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages: une méthode permettant de réellement tenir compte des connaissances antérieures des élèves

Sur la base d'observations d'exemples de la notion à l'étude (exemples *oui*) et de contre-exemples (exemples *non*) permettant la comparaison, cette méthode d'enseignement inductif laisse une grande place à l'expression des connaissances antérieures des élèves, incluant celles qui s'avèrent peu opérationnelles. Nous retenons cette méthode, car, à l'instar de Gauvin et Boivin (2013), « nous soutenons que l'enseignement doit montrer les limites des connaissances peu opérationnelles que les élèves ont élaborées, afin que ces connaissances soient transformées ou remplacées » (p.565).

Les trois phases de la médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages. La méthode proposée par Barth (2013b) se divise en trois phases : une phase d'observation et d'exploration, une phase de clarification et de validation et une phase d'abstraction.

La première phase, la phase d'observation et d'exploration, a pour but de trouver les caractéristiques essentielles de la notion à l'étude. Des exemples *oui* de la notion sont présentés aux élèves. Les élèves observent les exemples *oui* et émettent des hypothèses quant à ce qui caractérise cette notion. Des exemples *non* leur sont également soumis afin d'établir des contrastes et de discriminer certaines caractéristiques non essentielles relevées par les élèves (c.-à-d. rejeter une caractéristique qui ne s'avère pas observable en tout temps pour cette notion ou qui ne permet pas de la distinguer d'une autre). Par exemple, dans le cas du sujet, on ne retiendra pas la caractéristique qu'il ne s'efface pas dans la phrase de base puisque celle-ci ne lui est pas exclusive : il n'est pas le seul groupe de mots qui ne s'efface pas dans la phrase.

La deuxième phase, celle de clarification et de validation, vise à vérifier la compréhension réelle de la notion par les élèves et à en achever la construction. Lors de cette phase, de nouveaux exemples leur sont présentés, mais cette fois-ci, l'enseignant ne précise pas s'il s'agit d'exemples *oui* ou d'exemples *non* : c'est aux élèves de le déterminer en justifiant leur réponse, « ce qui revient à nommer tous les attributs essentiels du concept » (Barth, 2013b, p. 89). Les élèves verbalisent leurs réponses et justifications que l'enseignant valide immédiatement afin de les amener à clarifier certaines caractéristiques, à bien distinguer celles qui sont essentielles de celles qui ne le sont pas. Ainsi, cette phase permet de poursuivre la construction des connaissances, mais favorise aussi l'organisation des connaissances que les élèves ont construites.

La troisième phase est la phase d'abstraction. C'est à cette phase que l'enseignant évalue si les élèves ont effectivement construit les connaissances relatives à la notion étudiée et s'ils sont en mesure d'en faire le transfert dans d'autres contextes. Pour vérifier la construction des connaissances, l'enseignant soumet de nouveaux exemples aux élèves qui doivent, de nouveau, dire s'il s'agit d'un exemple *oui* ou *non* en justifiant leur réponse. Pour voir si les élèves effectuent un transfert de leurs apprentissages, il leur demande de produire leurs propres exemples en les justifiant, et d'en repérer ou d'utiliser la notion dans d'autres contextes.

Proposition d'une variante à la méthode de Barth. La méthode proposée par Barth (2013a, 2013b, 2004) s'avère appropriée lorsque la notion à l'étude est nouvelle pour les élèves. Toutefois, elle semble moins adéquate lorsque la notion a déjà fait l'objet d'un enseignement préalable (Barth, 2013a; Nadeau et Fisher, 2006). C'est le cas du sujet en 1^{re} secondaire, qui a été enseigné dès le 2^e cycle du primaire. Puisque nous savons que les élèves ont des connaissances très variées, voire peu opérationnelles, du sujet à l'entrée au secondaire, nous savons que certaines seront à déconstruire. Nous souhaitons donc que ces connaissances antérieures soient exprimées avant que la définition de la notion ne soit rappelée aux élèves afin que l'enseignant découvre quelles connaissances sont

effectivement à déconstruire. Ainsi, nous proposons d'ajouter une phase d'activation des connaissances en tout début de séquence. Le déroulement complet de l'intervention didactique sera décrit au point 3.1.2.

Objectif de la recherche

La méthode de Barth, ainsi que d'autres méthodes ou dispositifs qui recourent à des procédés inductifs (par exemple, la démarche active de découverte proposée par Chartrand, 1995), ont principalement en commun d'amener les élèves à exprimer leurs connaissances antérieures à travers leurs raisonnements grammaticaux, puis à leur faire subir une évolution en fonction de l'intervention des pairs et de la guidance de l'enseignant vers de nouvelles connaissances. Ils constituent donc une fenêtre ouverte non seulement sur les connaissances des élèves, mais aussi sur la façon dont ils construisent ces connaissances. Toutefois, si ces méthodes et dispositifs ont été mis en œuvre par certains chercheurs (par ex., Nadeau et Fisher, 2014; Barth, 2013a, 2013b, 2004; Lepoivre-Duc et Sautot, 2009 ; Wilkinson, 2009; Cogis, 2005; Haas, 1999), nous disposons encore de peu de données empiriques concernant leurs effets sur les apprentissages d'élèves de niveau secondaire.

De plus, à notre connaissance, aucune étude n'a mis en œuvre une séquence didactique inductive à propos de la notion de sujet et, par le fait même, des moments d'échanges structurés où les élèves expriment ouvertement leurs connaissances antérieures et où l'enseignant tente d'établir un pont entre celles-ci et les connaissances encore à construire.

La recherche a donc pour objectif de décrire les effets d'une intervention didactique inductive suivant la méthode de la médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages sur la performance d'élèves de 1^{re} secondaire à identifier le sujet dans une phrase.

Méthodologie

Collecte de données

L'échantillon. L'échantillon se compose de 93 élèves provenant de quatre classes de deux écoles secondaires québécoises ayant un indice de milieu socioéconomique (IMSE) semblable : IMSE de 6,56 pour l'une et de 7,37 pour l'autre. Les deux écoles se trouvent au rang décile 2 (MELS, 2014) ce qui indique qu'elles regroupent des élèves provenant de milieux plutôt favorisés. Deux classes (49 élèves), ayant la même enseignante, forment le groupe expérimental et proviennent de la première école. Les deux autres classes (44 élèves), dont chacune relève d'un enseignant différent, forment le groupe témoin et proviennent de la deuxième école. Il s'agit d'un échantillon de convenance tel que le conçoit Gaudreau (2011) : les enseignants ont été choisis sur la base de leur volontariat.

L'intervention. Notre intervention consiste en une séquence didactique suivant la méthode de la médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages^{iv}. Elle se déroule en quatre phases.

Une première phase, l'activation des connaissances, permet à l'enseignant de dresser un inventaire des connaissances antérieures de ses élèves à propos de la notion de sujet. Toutes les connaissances sont accueillies et notées au tableau afin que l'enseignant détermine ce qui devra être observé lors de la phase suivante.

Pour la deuxième phase, celle d'observation et d'exploration, le corpus d'exemples créé se divise en seize séries. Une première série vise à faire un premier tri dans les caractéristiques du sujet proposées dans la phase d'activation des connaissances. Les élèves testent une première fois

l'ensemble des connaissances exprimées et mettent en doute un certain nombre de caractéristiques énoncées. Certaines seront rapidement éliminées, d'autres, possiblement retenues, les élèves jugeant que d'autres observations leur permettront d'en déterminer la fiabilité. Quatre autres séries servent à construire ou à valider les connaissances relatives aux caractéristiques essentielles du sujet (cf. tableau 1). Le tableau 2 présente la série d'exemples permettant d'observer l'une des caractéristiques essentielles du sujet, soit qu'il peut être encadré par *c'est... qui*^v.

Tableau 2

Exemples oui et exemples non pour construire ou valider la connaissance « Le sujet peut être encadré par c'est... qui »

Exemples oui	Exemples non
<p>1. <u>Le président Obama</u> visitera le Canada l'année prochaine.</p> <p>➔ C'est le président Obama qui visitera le Canada l'année prochaine.</p>	<p>4. Le président Obama visitera <u>le Canada</u> l'année prochaine.</p> <p>➔ *Le président Obama visitera c'est le Canada qui l'année prochaine.</p>
<p>2. <u>Les ambulancières</u> soulèvent doucement les jambes du blessé.</p> <p>➔ Ce sont les ambulancières qui soulèvent doucement les jambes du blessé.</p>	<p>5. Les ambulancières soulèvent doucement <u>les jambes du blessé</u>.</p> <p>➔ *Les ambulancières soulèvent doucement ce sont les jambes du blessé qui.</p>
<p>3. Parmi ses vêtements se cache <u>une jolie paire de bas roses</u>.</p> <p>➔ C'est une jolie paire de bas roses qui se cache parmi ses vêtements.</p>	

Dans les exemples *oui* (exemples 1 à 3), le groupe de mots qui a la fonction sujet est souligné ; dans les exemples *non* (exemples 4 et 5), un groupe de mots qui a une fonction autre que sujet est souligné. Les flèches indiquent qu'une manipulation syntaxique a été opérée sur la phrase. L'astérisque informe les élèves que la phrase est agrammaticale. L'observation de ces exemples amènera les élèves à formuler l'hypothèse que seul le sujet peut être encadré par *c'est... qui*.

De telles séries d'exemples amèneront également les élèves à remettre en question certaines connaissances, dont celle voulant que le sujet se trouve avant le verbe dans une phrase (exemple 3) : l'enseignant pourra choisir ici de faire observer un autre corpus d'exemples, celui qui illustre la nécessaire reconstruction de la phrase de base avant l'utilisation de la manipulation d'ajout du *c'est... qui*. Ainsi, durant cette phase d'observation et d'exploration, si un élève mentionne ou réitère une connaissance moins opérationnelle ou tout simplement marginale à propos du sujet, l'enseignant pourra recourir à une série d'exemples ciblant précisément cette connaissance à nuancer ou à déconstruire. Par exemple, si un élève mentionne que le sujet est constitué d'un GN, connaissance partiellement exacte, l'enseignant pourra recourir à la série d'exemples suivante pour tenter de déconstruire cette connaissance :

Tableau 3

Série d'exemples pour déconstruire la connaissance « le sujet est un GN (ou un nom) »

Exemples oui	Exemples non
1. <u>Éternuer</u> demande énormément d'énergie. 2. <u>Observer les oiseaux</u> est le passe-temps préféré de mon oncle. 3. <u>S'exercer tous les jours</u> permet de devenir meilleur. 4. <u>Elle</u> me surprend beaucoup. 5. <u>Ceci</u> est bon pour la santé.	6. Apprends <u>le chinois</u> . 7. Écoute <u>Marilyne</u> .

Les élèves constateront, avec ces exemples, que le sujet peut se réaliser autrement qu'en GN, ici en GVinf (exemples 1 à 3) ou en pronom (exemples 4 et 5). Ils pourront également remarquer qu'un GN n'est pas forcément sujet (exemples 4 et 5 du tableau 2), notamment quand la phrase ne contient qu'un seul GN (exemples 6 et 7 du tableau 3).

Ainsi, onze autres séries d'exemples permettront de tester les limites de certaines connaissances non opérationnelles afin de nuancer certaines d'entre elles, ou d'en déconstruire pour en reconstruire de plus opérationnelles. Le tableau 4 présente les connaissances visées par ces onze séries d'exemples, connaissances observées par Brissaud et Cogis (2004 ; 2002), ainsi que par Gauvin (2011).

Tableau 4

Connaissances ciblées par les différentes séries d'exemples de la séquence didactique

Connaissances à nuancer relativement à la notion de sujet	Connaissances à « déconstruire » et à « reconstruire » relativement à la notion de sujet
Le sujet... 1. ne peut pas se déplacer 2. ne peut pas s'effacer	Le sujet... 3. répond à la question <i>qui est-ce qui?</i> ou <i>qu'est-ce qui?</i> (et ses variantes) 4. est un GN (ou un nom) 5. est un nom animé (ou un groupe dont le noyau est un nom animé) 6. est placé devant le verbe / peut se trouver après le verbe 7. fait l'action exprimée par le verbe (dit qui fait l'action du verbe) 8. explique de quoi parle la phrase 9. s'il est un pronom, peut être remplacé par un GN (nominalisation) 10. n'est pas le GN contenu dans la subordonnée relative, est plutôt le GN qui inclut une subordonnée relative 11. et les pronoms de conjugaison de 1 ^{re} et 2 ^e personne du pluriel : <i>nous</i> et <i>vous</i> sont sujet de phrase

En résumé, l'enseignant, attentif à ce que les élèves « savent » de la notion, portera une attention particulière aux connaissances non opérationnelles qu'ils expriment. Dès qu'une telle

connaissance est mise de l'avant, il tentera de placer les élèves devant des exemples leur permettant d'en voir les limites.

Lors de la troisième phase, celle de clarification et de validation, une nouvelle série de dix exemples est présentée aux élèves : il s'agit de phrases qui comprennent un groupe de mots souligné. Les élèves déterminent, pour chaque exemple, s'il constitue un exemple *oui* (le groupe de mots souligné a la fonction sujet) ou *non* (le groupe de mots souligné n'a pas la fonction sujet) et justifient leur réponse en s'appuyant sur les quatre caractéristiques qui lui sont exclusives.

Finalement, la dernière phase, la phase d'abstraction, vérifie les connaissances des élèves dans de nouvelles phrases. Les élèves doivent y identifier le sujet et justifier leur réponse. Dans le cadre de l'intervention didactique, il s'agit de la seule activité pour cette phase, mais nous précisons à l'enseignante que la phase d'abstraction ne peut se limiter à cette activité. Nous l'invitons donc à prévoir des activités régulières qui permettront aux élèves d'utiliser leurs connaissances dans de nombreux contextes.

Les instruments. Pour décrire les effets de l'intervention, trois tests (prétest, posttest 1 et posttest 2) ont permis de recueillir les données. La collecte de données s'est déroulée au cours de l'automne 2014 et de l'hiver 2015.

Tableau 5

Échéancier de la collecte de données et de l'intervention

	Collecte de données 1 Prétest	Intervention	Collecte de données 2 Posttest 1	Collecte de données 3 Posttest 2
Groupe expérimental	Une semaine avant l'enseignement	Intervention conçue (cf. 3.1.2)	Lundi suivant l'enseignement	2 mois après la collecte de données 2
Groupe témoin	Une semaine avant l'enseignement	Enseignement tel que prévu par l'enseignant	Lundi suivant l'enseignement	2 mois après la collecte de données 2

L'équipe de recherche n'est intervenue d'aucune manière dans l'enseignement du groupe témoin : nous avons simplement invité les enseignants à donner leur enseignement comme ils l'avaient planifié. Cet enseignement s'est voulu essentiellement déductif^{vi}. Alors que l'intervention dans le groupe expérimental a duré environ trois cours et demi, elle n'a duré environ qu'un cours et demi dans le groupe témoin^{vii}.

Pour décrire les effets de l'intervention conçue sur la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet, trois tests équivalents ont été conçus et validés. Le prétest permet de dresser un portrait de la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet avant l'enseignement de la notion de sujet en 1^{re} secondaire; les deux posttests, passés immédiatement après l'enseignement de la notion puis deux mois plus tard, permettent d'observer les effets de l'enseignement sur cette performance.

Les tests consistent en une série de 48 items, plus précisément 48 phrases dans lesquelles les élèves doivent mettre le sujet entre parenthèses. Deux variables ont été contrôlées pour la composition des items utilisés dans les tests : la réalisation du sujet et sa position dans la phrase. En tout, 12 réalisations (tableau 6) et quatre positions (tableau 7) ont été retenues.

Tableau 6

Réalisations du sujet retenues dans les tests

	Réalisations du sujet	Exemples
1	Pronom encadrable <i>elles</i>	<i>elles</i>
2	Pronom non encadrable	<i>je</i>
3	GN [nom propre]	<i>Guillaume</i>
4	GN [Dét. + N]	<i>des peintres</i>
5	GN [Dét. + N + GN]	<i>cette horloge, une bruyante antiquité</i>
6	GN [Dét. + GAdj + N]	<i>le brillant détective</i>
7	GN [Dét. + N + GAdj]	<i>ces films dramatiques</i>
8	GN [Dét. + N (animé) + GPrép-N (animé)]	<i>les parents de Josiane</i>
9	GN [Dét. + N (animé) + GPrép-N (non animé)]	<i>les livreurs de journaux</i>
10	GN [Dét. + N (non animé) + GPrép-N (animé)]	<i>le style de la journaliste</i>
11	GN [Dét. + N (non animé) + GPrép-N (non animé)]	<i>un cadenas à clé</i>
12	[Dét. + GAdj + n + GPrép]	<i>les excellents comédiens de la troupe</i>

Tableau 7

Positions du sujet retenues dans les tests

	Positions du sujet	Représentation	Exemples avec sujet GN [Dét + N] ou pronom non encadrable pour 2(b)
1	Sujet en position initiale, suivi du prédicat débutant par le verbe	SUJET VERBE (S-V)	<i>Les ingrédients étonnent les chefs.</i>
2	Sujet en position initiale, (a) suivi du prédicat débutant par un pronom complément ou (b) séparé du prédicat par un complément de phrase	SUJET () VERBE (S-X-V)	(a) <i>Ils les protègent de ces virus.</i> (b) <i>Les patrons, pendant les vacances, appellent régulièrement leurs employés.</i>
3	Sujet en position non initiale, précédé d'un complément de phrase et suivi du prédicat	() SUJET VERBE (X-S-V)	<i>Sur les flots, les marins voguent avec leur capitaine.</i>
4	Sujet en position inversée (situé après le verbe)	VERBE SUJET (V-S)	<i>Dans les grottes dégouttent les stalactites.</i>

Pour constituer les trois tests, un total de 144 items (48 items X 3 tests) ont été produits et préalablement validés auprès de 446 élèves de 1^{re} secondaire provenant de cinq écoles différentes. La validation statistique des items des trois tests au moyen du test de Friedman a permis de nous assurer que les items étaient équivalents d'un test à l'autre^{viii}.

Les trois tests ont été administrés selon un ordre aléatoire dans chacune des quatre classes (par exemple, classe exp.1 ; B-A-C, classe exp. 2 ; C-B-A, etc.)

Analyse de données

Les données consistent en l'identification du sujet par les élèves, c'est-à-dire le mot ou le groupe de mots qu'ils ont mis entre parenthèses à chacun des 48 items des tests. Un codage fermé (Van Der Maren, 2004) nous permet de préciser si l'identification est réussie, partiellement réussie (sujet identifié en partie seulement), non réussie ou absente (aucune identification dans la phrase). Un score est par ailleurs associé à chacun des statuts d'identification (réussie, 2 points ; partiellement réussie, 1 point ; non réussie ou aucune identification, 0 point). Par exemple, dans la phrase *La bénévole dévouée la décore d'une médaille*, l'identification de *la bénévole* comme sujet reçoit le code *identification partiellement réussie* et un score d'un point. Les fréquences d'apparition des différents codes, de même que les scores, ont ensuite subi des traitements statistiques qui seront présentés dans la prochaine section.

Résultats et pistes d'interprétation

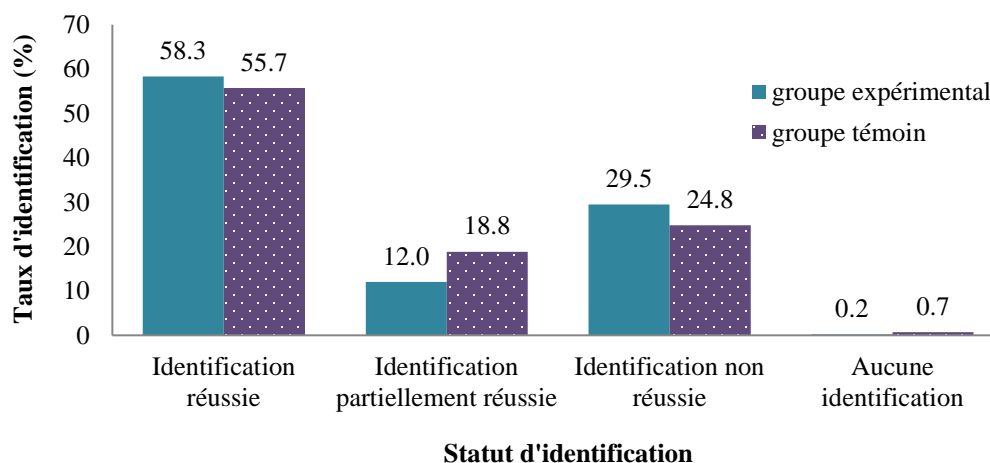
Performance dans l'identification du sujet au prétest

Nous présenterons d'abord les résultats relatifs à la réussite globale de l'identification du sujet, puis, ceux selon la réalisation du sujet et selon la position du sujet. Nous terminerons avec une synthèse des résultats au prétest.

Résultats relatifs à la réussite globale de l'identification du sujet au prétest. Au prétest, 48 items permettaient l'identification de 48 sujets par les 49 élèves du groupe expérimental, pour un total de 2 352 identifications (49 élèves X 48 items) et par 44 élèves du groupe témoin, pour un total de 2 112 identifications (44 élèves X 48 items). Le graphe 1 présente les taux d'identification du sujet de chacun des groupes pour chacun des statuts d'identification (identification réussie, partiellement réussie, non réussie, aucune identification). Ces résultats révèlent que les élèves ne réussissent leur identification qu'un peu plus d'une fois sur deux. Quand on sait que le sujet est enseigné depuis le 2^e cycle, un tel résultat a de quoi surprendre. Il s'avère toutefois un peu plus encourageant que celui de Gauvin (2011) qui avait observé que seulement 40 % des identifications du sujet étaient réussies avant l'enseignement de la notion en 1^{re} secondaire.

Graphe 1

Taux d'identification du sujet au prétest par statut d'identification et par groupe

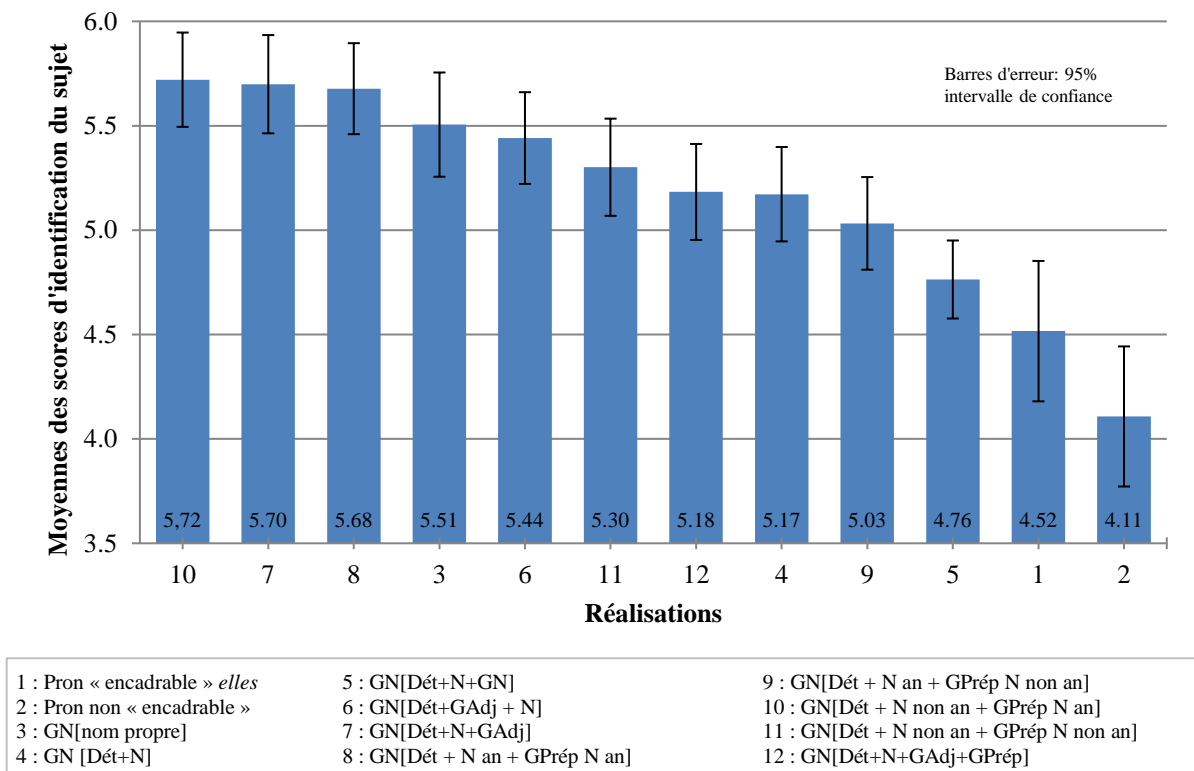


Afin de comparer la performance globale entre les deux groupes, les scores obtenus par les élèves pour leurs identifications sont utilisés. Précisons qu'un élève qui aurait réussi toutes les identifications obtiendrait un score de 96 (48 items x 2 points). L'hypothèse de normalité est vérifiée et les distributions suivent la loi normale. De plus, comme la taille de l'échantillon dans chacun des groupes est suffisante, nous avons pu procéder à des tests paramétriques sur l'ensemble des données, sauf dans quelques exceptions^{ix}. L'analyse statistique à l'aide du *test t* montre qu'il n'y a pas de différence significative ($t(91) = -0,162$, $p = 0,872$) entre le groupe expérimental (Moyenne = 61,78; Écart type = 23,71) et le groupe témoin (Moyenne = 62,50; Écart type = 18,85). Ainsi, les deux groupes sont équivalents au prétest.

Résultats selon la réalisation du sujet au prétest. Comme les groupes expérimental et témoin sont équivalents au prétest, la moyenne des scores de l'ensemble des élèves permettra d'établir un portrait de la performance des élèves de 1^{re} secondaire à identifier le sujet avant que la notion ne leur soit enseignée. Chaque réalisation (cf. tableau 6) est représentée dans quatre items du test (une occurrence dans chaque position); ainsi, un élève qui aurait réussi toutes ses identifications pour une même réalisation obtiendrait un score de 8 (4 items X 2 points).

Graph 2

Moyennes des scores d'identification du sujet selon sa réalisation



Sur le plan descriptif, on peut voir que les réalisations du sujet les moins bien identifiées par les élèves sont d'abord les pronoms (réalisations 2 et 1). Ce résultat vient nuancer ceux de Brissaud et Cogis (2002) qui observaient que, aux yeux des élèves de CM2 (10-11 ans), l'une des

caractéristiques de ce qui pouvait « [prendre] le statut de sujet » (p. 38) était notamment sa réalisation en pronom. À ce stade-ci, il nous semble difficile d'expliquer cette différence.

Parmi les sujets se réalisant en GN, ceux dont l'expansion est également un GN sont les plus problématiques pour les élèves (réalisation 5). La particularité de ces GN est que l'expansion, aussi un GN, a le même référent sémantique que le noyau. Par exemple, dans le GN *cette horloge, une bruyante antiquité*, le noyau *horloge* et l'expansion *une bruyante antiquité* représentent le même objet. Or, nous pensons qu'il est possible que les élèves, ne voyant pas la dépendance syntaxique du GN expansion au noyau du GN sujet, traitent ces derniers comme deux GN distincts parmi lesquels ils choisissent celui qui répond (le mieux) aux critères sur lesquels ils s'appuient pour identifier le sujet. Ces cas sont fort intrigants et il serait pertinent de s'intéresser au raisonnement des élèves afin de déterminer ce qui motive leur choix de l'un ou l'autre de ces deux « GN distincts ».

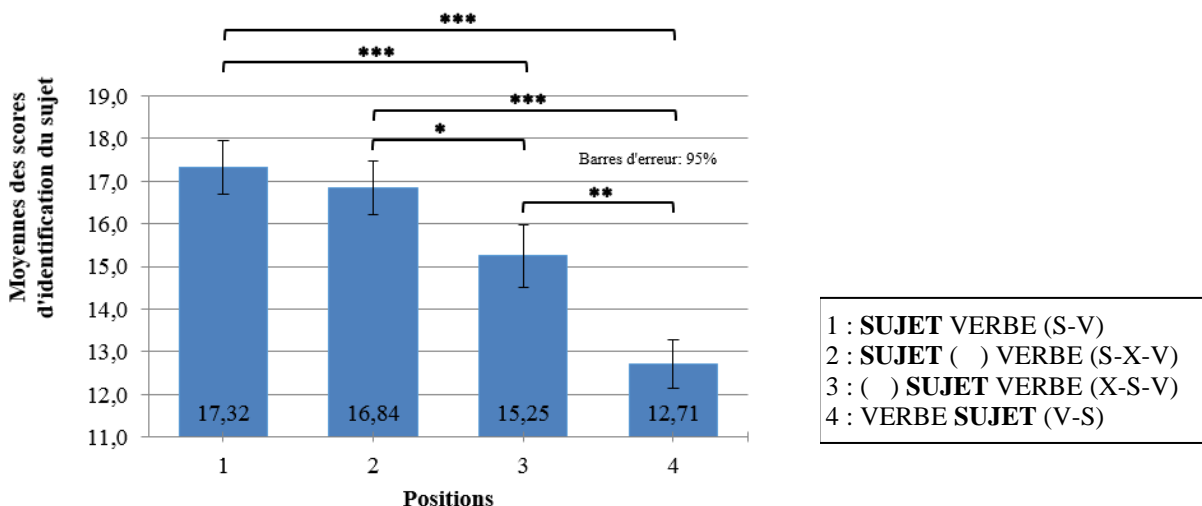
Pour tester les différences entre les moyennes des scores de chacune des 12 réalisations au prétest, une ANOVA à mesures répétées à un facteur (réalisation du sujet) suivie d'analyses de comparaisons multiples a été effectuée. Ces tests révèlent que la majorité des comparaisons appariées (51 comparaisons sur 66, soit 77,3 %) ne présente pas de différence significative dans la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet entre les réalisations. Les résultats confirment néanmoins qu'il y a notamment une différence significative dans la performance des élèves entre les réalisations du sujet les moins bien réussies (réalisations 2, 1 et 5), que nous venons de présenter, et celles les mieux réussies (réalisations 10, 8 et 7) – seules les réalisations 1 et 10 ne présentent pas de différence entre elles, mais marginalement ($p = 0,054$).

Résultats selon la position du sujet au prétest. Rappelons que quatre positions du sujet ont été retenues pour la constitution des items (cf. tableau 7). Chaque position est représentée par 12 items (une occurrence pour chacune des 12 réalisations). Ainsi, un score maximal de 24 (12 items X 2 points) a été attribué pour chacune des quatre positions.

Graphe 3

Moyennes des scores d'identification du sujet selon sa position

(* $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$)



Ici aussi, une ANOVA à mesures répétées à un facteur (position du sujet) suivie d'analyses de comparaisons multiples a été effectuée pour tester les différences entre les moyennes des scores de chacune des 4 positions au prétest.

La performance moyenne des élèves à identifier le sujet présente une différence dans presque tous les cas, d'une position à l'autre. En fait, seules leurs performances pour les positions 1 (S-V) et 2 (S-X-V) ne présentent pas de différence significative entre elles ($p = 1,000$). Ces deux positions ont en commun le fait que le sujet se trouve en tête de phrase et se distinguent des deux autres qui, elles, ne placent pas le sujet en tête de phrase. La position 4 (V-S), celle pour laquelle la moyenne est la moins élevée, présente une différence significative avec la moyenne de toutes les autres positions. La position 3 (X-S-V), qui obtient une moyenne plus élevée que celle de la position 4 (V-S), mais moins élevée que celle des autres positions, présente également une différence significative avec la moyenne de toutes les autres positions. Il semble donc que les élèves cherchent un groupe de mots placé en début de phrase lorsqu'ils doivent identifier le sujet.

Une autre observation nous semble importante concernant les sujets inversés (position 4) qui sont les moins identifiés au prétest. Notre savoir d'expérience nous permet d'avancer que les configurations syntaxiques qui placent le sujet après le verbe, notamment les phrases interrogatives ou inversées, sont peu ou ne sont pas du tout proposées aux élèves en exemples ou dans les exercices lors de l'enseignement de la notion de sujet^x. Ainsi, les élèves ne s'exercent pas à reconstruire la phrase de base pour ensuite être en mesure d'y utiliser les manipulations syntaxiques décisives. Les phrases où le sujet est en position 2 (S-X-V) ou 3 (X-S-V) sont, quant à elles, sans doute un peu plus présentes dans les activités prévues par l'enseignant, mais peut-être pas suffisamment. Nous croyons, à l'instar de Nadeau et Fisher (2006), qu'une plus grande variété de structures de phrases doit être proposée aux élèves afin qu'ils développent leur raisonnement grammatical.

Synthèse des résultats au prétest. En résumé, au prétest, on ne constate pas de différence dans la performance à identifier le sujet dans une phrase entre les groupes expérimental et témoin. De plus, les résultats montrent que, à l'entrée au secondaire, les élèves réussissent moins bien les identifications des sujets dans les contextes syntaxiques où :

- le sujet est un pronom ;
- le sujet est un GN ayant un GN comme expansion ;
- le sujet ne se trouve pas en position initiale (et plus particulièrement lorsqu'il est en position inversée, soit après le verbe).

Performance dans l'identification du sujet aux posttests 1 et 2

Les résultats au posttest 1 nous informent sur la performance des élèves dans l'identification du sujet immédiatement après l'enseignement. Les résultats au posttest 2 permettent de déterminer si les effets de l'enseignement sur la performance perdurent dans le temps. Comme nous l'avons fait pour les résultats au prétest, nous commencerons par présenter les résultats relatifs à la réussite globale de l'identification du sujet. Puis, nous poursuivrons avec les résultats selon la réalisation du sujet et selon sa position. Une synthèse des résultats conclura cette section.

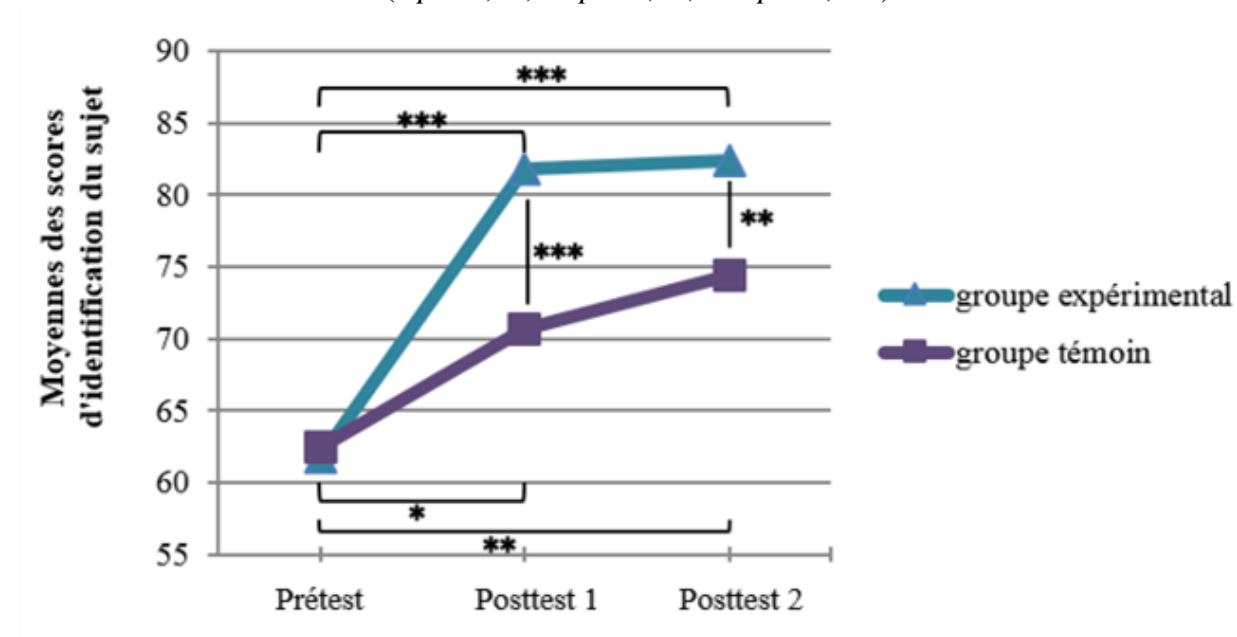
Résultats relatifs à la réussite globale de l'identification du sujet aux posttests. Nous avons vu qu'avant l'enseignement de la notion de sujet, les groupes expérimental et témoin ne présentaient pas de différence dans leur performance à identifier le sujet dans une phrase. Voyons comment leur

performance évolue après l'enseignement en tenant compte des scores moyens de chacun des groupes.

Graphe 4

Moyenne des scores d'identification du sujet par test pour chacun des groupes

(* $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$)



Afin de voir l'évolution de la performance des élèves, une ANOVA à mesures répétées à deux facteurs est réalisée et une interaction est constatée ($F(1,495; 136,037) = 5,648, p = 0,009$). Les résultats montrent que, pour les deux groupes, la moyenne des scores d'identification du sujet a augmenté de façon significative entre le prétest et le posttest 1 (groupe expérimental, $p < 0,001$; groupe témoin, $p = 0,017$). On remarque toutefois qu'il n'y a pas de différence entre le posttest 1 et le posttest 2 (groupe expérimental, $p = 1,000$, groupe témoin, $p = 0,102$) dans la moyenne des scores, indiquant ainsi que la performance se maintient deux mois après l'enseignement de la notion de sujet. Finalement, entre le prétest et le posttest 2, une différence est observée pour chacun des groupes (groupe expérimental, $p < 0,001$; groupe témoin, $p = 0,001$) dans les scores moyens.

Si les deux groupes, qui ne présentent pas de différence au prétest ($p = 0,872$), se comportent de la même façon dans le temps, ils sont significativement différents au posttest 1 ($p < 0,001$) et au posttest 2 ($p = 0,002$), le groupe expérimental obtenant une meilleure performance que le groupe témoin dans les deux cas. On peut donc penser que la séquence didactique conçue pour la recherche a eu un effet plus favorable sur la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet.

Résultats selon la réalisation du sujet aux posttests. Dans le cas des scores obtenus en fonction de la réalisation du sujet, l'hypothèse de normalité n'est pas vérifiée et les distributions ne suivent pas la loi normale. Des tests non paramétriques sont donc effectués afin de déterminer comment la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet évolue du prétest aux posttests 1 et 2 en fonction de la réalisation du sujet. En premier lieu, un test de Friedman analyse l'effet du temps en

fixant le groupe. Si le test est significatif, il est alors suivi d'un test des rangs signés de Wilcoxon pour lequel une correction de Bonferroni est appliquée manuellement^{xi}. En second lieu, un test de Mann-Whitney analyse l'effet de groupe alors que le temps est fixé.

Le groupe expérimental améliore sa performance d'identification du sujet entre le prétest et le posttest 1 pour onze des douze réalisations; dans le cas de la réalisation pour laquelle aucune différence n'est observée (GN=Dét+N+GAdj [réalisation 7]), le groupe améliore néanmoins sa performance entre le prétest et le posttest 2. Entre les deux posttests, aucune différence n'est observée à l'exception d'une seule réalisation pour laquelle un recul est observé dans la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet (GN=Dét+N+GN [réalisation 5]).

Dans le groupe témoin, on n'observe une amélioration de la performance à identifier le sujet entre le prétest et le posttest 1 que pour quatre réalisations sur douze (pronom « encadrable » *elles* [réalisation 1], pronom non « encadrable » [réalisation 2], GN=Dét+N+GN [réalisation 5], GN=Dét+Nanimé+GPrépNanimé [réalisation 8]). Il améliore également sa performance pour une autre réalisation entre le prétest et le posttest 2 (GN=Dét+Nanimé+GPrépNnon animé [réalisation 9]). Aucune différence n'est observée entre les deux posttests dans tous les cas.

Au prétest, il n'y a pas de différence dans la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet entre les deux groupes peu importe la réalisation. Au posttest 1, le groupe expérimental obtient une meilleure performance que le groupe témoin pour neuf réalisations du sujet. Pour les trois autres réalisations (pronom « encadrable » *elles* [réalisation 1], pronom non « encadrable » [réalisation 2] et GN=Dét+N+GN [réalisation 5]), aucune différence n'est observée entre les groupes. Au posttest 2, c'est pour huit réalisations que le groupe expérimental obtient, encore une fois, une meilleure performance que le groupe témoin. Aucune différence n'est observée entre les groupes pour les quatre autres réalisations (pronom non « encadrable » [réalisation 2], GN=Dét+N [réalisation 4], GN=Dét+N+GN [réalisation 5], GN=Dét+Nanimé+GPrépNanimé [réalisation 8]).

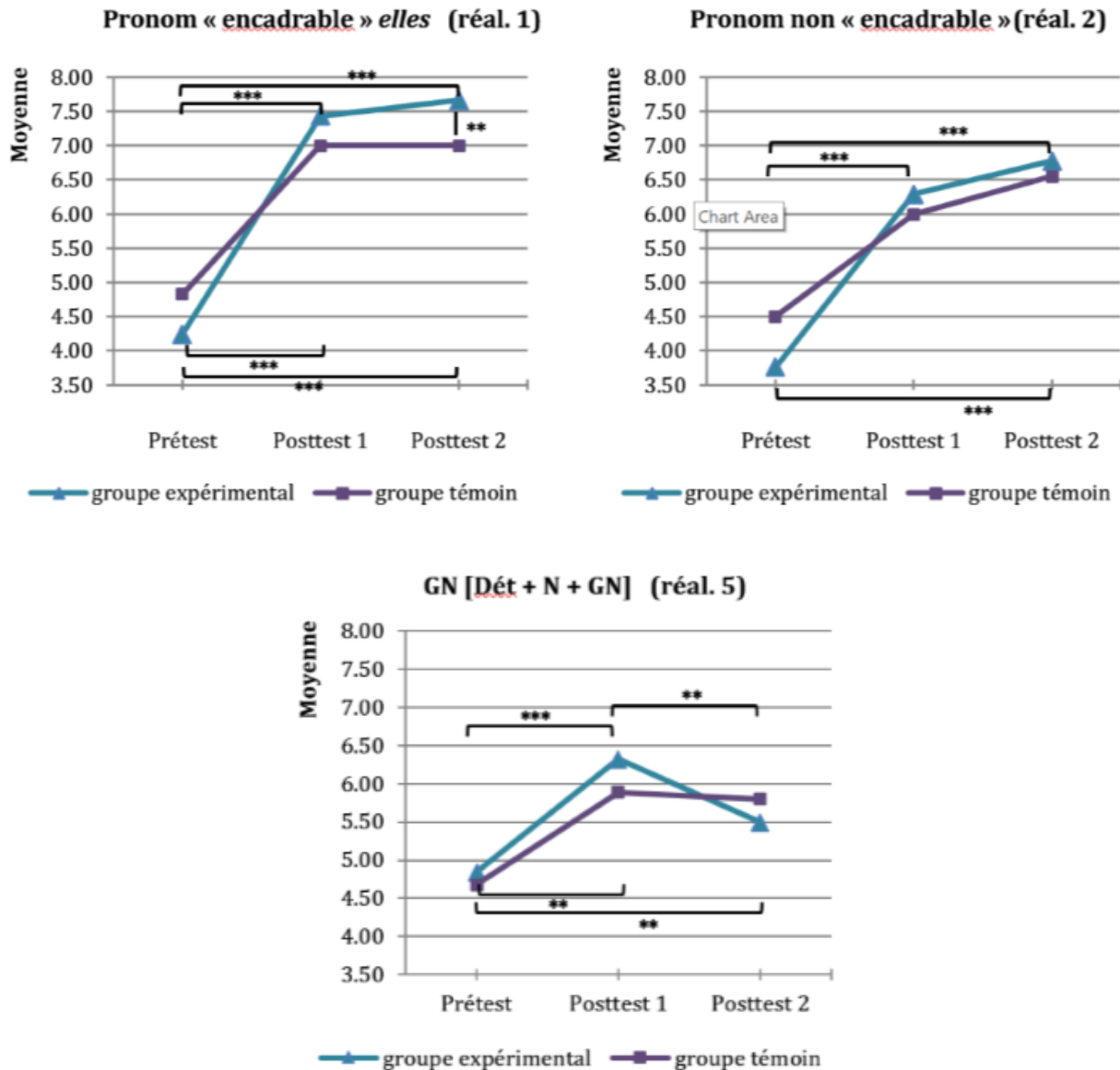
Ainsi, ces résultats semblent confirmer que la séquence didactique élaborée dans le cadre de la recherche a eu un effet plus favorable sur les apprentissages des élèves, relativement à la majorité des réalisations du sujet, que les séquences vécues dans le groupe témoin.

Au prétest, trois réalisations étaient apparues comme étant plus problématiques pour les élèves, soit les pronoms (réalisations 1 et 2) et les GN dont l'expansion est un GN (réalisation 5). Voyons comment évolue la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet qui se présente sous l'une ou l'autre de ces trois réalisations.

Graphe 5

Moyennes des scores d'identification du sujet pour les trois réalisations problématiques au prétest, par test et pour chacun des groupes

(* $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$)



Il est intéressant de constater que les trois réalisations les plus problématiques au prétest sont celles pour lesquelles les groupes ne présentent toujours pas de différence entre eux au posttest 1 (réalisation 1 : $p = 0,188$; réalisation 2 : $p = 0,290$; réalisation 5 : $p = 0,156$). Les deux groupes améliorent leur performance entre le prétest et le posttest 1 pour ces réalisations (groupe expérimental : $p < 0,001$ pour les trois réalisations; groupe témoin : $p < 0,001$ pour la réalisation 1, $p = 0,002$ pour la réalisation 2 et $p = 0,001$ pour la réalisation 5). Toutefois, en observant les résultats au posttest 2, on remarque que, pour deux de ces réalisations, la séquence didactique de

notre étude n'a pas eu un effet plus favorable dans le groupe expérimental que les séquences planifiées par les enseignants des groupes témoins.

Il n'y a pas de différence dans la performance du groupe témoin entre les deux posttests. Ainsi, les apprentissages semblent perdurer dans le temps pour ces trois réalisations ($p = 0,894$ pour la réalisation 1, $p = 0,062$ pour la réalisation 2 et $p = 0,808$ pour la réalisation 5). Il en va de même pour le groupe expérimental en ce qui concerne les sujets qui se réalisent en pronoms ($p = 0,130$ pour la réalisation 1 et $p = 0,166$ pour la réalisation 2). Toutefois, le groupe expérimental obtient une moins bonne performance à identifier les sujets réalisés en un GN ayant un autre GN comme expansion ($p = 0,003$). Même si, au posttest 2, les deux groupes ne présentent pas de différence pour cette réalisation ($p = 0,313$), ce recul dans la performance du groupe expérimental est étonnant, d'autant plus qu'il fait suite à l'amélioration observée au posttest 1. Cela dit, il semble que, même après l'enseignement, les élèves des deux groupes considèrent toujours ces GN comme deux GN distincts.

Résultats selon la position du sujet aux posttests. Pour voir comment évolue la performance des élèves à identifier le sujet dans ses différentes positions, des ANOVAs à mesures répétées à deux facteurs (le facteur fixe étant le groupe et le facteur répété, le temps) ont été effectuées.

Le groupe expérimental améliore sa performance à identifier le sujet pour toutes les positions au posttest 1 et cette performance est maintenue au posttest 2. Le groupe témoin, quant à lui, n'améliore sa performance que pour deux positions au posttest 1 (S-V [position 1] et X-S-V [position 3]) et maintient cette performance dans les deux cas. Pour les deux autres positions, le groupe témoin ne présente aucune différence dans sa performance entre le prétest et le posttest 2.

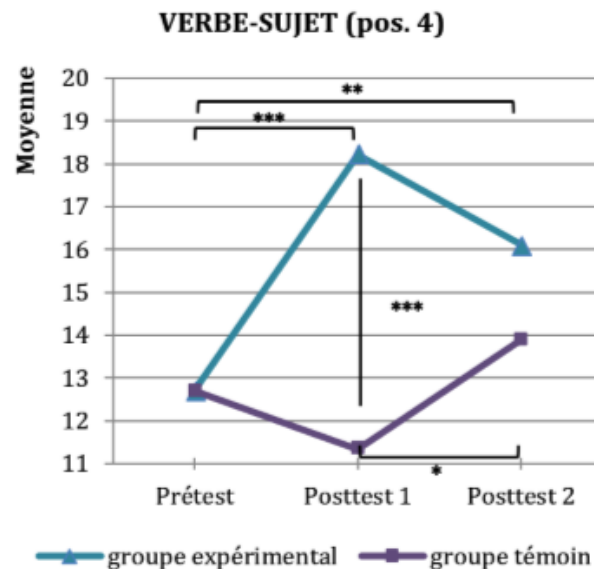
Au prétest, les deux groupes ne présentaient pas de différence dans leur performance à identifier le sujet, peu importe la position. Au posttest 1, le groupe expérimental obtient une meilleure performance que le groupe témoin à identifier le sujet pour toutes les positions sauf lorsque le sujet est placé immédiatement avant le verbe (position 1). Pour cette position, les deux groupes ne présentent pas de différence au posttest 1. Au posttest 2, les groupes présentent une différence pour deux positions (S-X-V [position 2] et X-S-V [position 3]), le groupe expérimental offrant encore une fois la meilleure performance.

Nous avons vu qu'au prétest, l'identification du sujet en position V-S (position 4) était particulièrement problématique chez les élèves. Voyons plus précisément comment la performance à identifier le sujet dans cette position évolue dans le temps pour chacun des groupes.

Graphe 6

Moyenne des scores d'identification du sujet pour la position V-S, problématique au prétest, par test et pour chacun des groupes

(* $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$)



Lorsque le sujet est en position V-S (position 4), l'ANOVA indique qu'il y a interaction ($F(2; 182) = 14,836, p = 0,000$). Le groupe expérimental s'améliore entre le prétest et le posttest 1 ($p < 0,001$) et entre le prétest et le posttest 2 ($p = 0,002$), mais ne présente pas de différence entre les posttests ($p = 0,065$). Dans le groupe témoin, c'est le contraire qui se produit : il ne présente pas de différence entre le prétest et le posttest 1 ($p = 0,328$) et entre le prétest et le posttest 2 ($p = 0,719$), mais s'améliore entre les posttests ($p = 0,026$).

Ces résultats suggèrent que les élèves ont tendance à identifier un groupe de mots en tête de phrase pour identifier le sujet. Toutefois, l'amélioration observée pour la position 3, où le sujet n'est pas en tête de phrase, mais se trouve néanmoins en position préverbale, nous pousse à corriger un peu cette impression. En effet, il semble plutôt que les élèves aient compris que le sujet n'est pas forcément en tête de phrase, mais demeurent avec l'idée qu'il est placé avant le verbe, ce qui rejoint un peu plus les observations de Brissaud et Cogis (2002). Même si cette connaissance s'avère déjà moins rigide que la précédente, elle suppose que les élèves n'ont pas fini de construire la connaissance qu'un sujet puisse se trouver après le verbe et que c'est dans la phrase de base qu'il est toujours en position initiale.

Synthèse des résultats aux posttests. En résumé, les deux groupes améliorent globalement leur performance à identifier le sujet entre le prétest et chacun des posttests, mais ne présentent pas de différence entre les deux posttests.

Le groupe expérimental améliore sa performance au posttest 1 pour la plupart des réalisations et pour toutes les positions. Il maintient cette performance au posttest 2 dans pratiquement tous les cas également.

Parallèlement, la performance du groupe témoin ne diffère pas d'un test à l'autre pour plus de la moitié des réalisations ainsi que pour une position. Dans le cas de quatre réalisations et de deux positions, sa performance s'améliore entre le prétest et le posttest 1 et se maintient entre les deux posttests. Notons que pour une position, le groupe témoin ne s'améliore qu'entre les deux posttests.

Pour la majorité des réalisations et positions du sujet, la performance des deux groupes n'est pas différente au prétest, mais est différente au posttest 1. Au posttest 2, la performance des deux groupes est généralement différente d'une réalisation à l'autre, mais ne l'est que pour deux positions sur quatre (positions 2 et 3). Dans tous les cas où il y a une différence entre les groupes, le groupe expérimental offre la meilleure performance.

Il semble donc que la séquence didactique élaborée dans le cadre de la recherche a eu un effet plus favorable sur les apprentissages des élèves relatifs à l'identification du sujet que les séquences vécues dans le groupe témoin.

Conclusion

La recherche visait à décrire les effets d'une intervention didactique suivant la méthode de la médiation sociocognitive des apprentissages sur la performance d'élèves de 1^{re} secondaire à identifier le sujet. Les résultats montrent que cet enseignement a mené les élèves du groupe expérimental à une plus grande amélioration de leur performance globale, d'une part, et à une meilleure performance globale que celle des élèves du groupe témoin. Cet effet se remarque aussi en considérant les réalisations et positions du sujet indépendamment : le groupe expérimental améliore sa performance pour chacune d'entre elles entre le premier et le dernier test, à l'exception d'une seule (GN=Dét+N+GN [réalisation 5]) alors que le groupe témoin ne l'améliore que pour 5 réalisations et 2 positions. De plus, chaque fois qu'une différence est observée entre les groupes, le groupe expérimental a la meilleure performance.

Cependant, nous ne pouvons passer sous silence quelques limites de notre recherche, notamment, le nombre différent d'enseignants impliqués auprès des classes de chacun des groupes – où un possible effet enseignant pourrait expliquer certains effets – et la durée d'enseignement inégale entre les deux groupes – on ne peut exclure que certains effets soient dus à un plus grand nombre de périodes d'enseignement de la notion dans les classes du groupe expérimental. D'ailleurs, à nos yeux, cette apparente limite temporelle suggère surtout que consacrer plus de temps à l'enseignement de certaines notions suivant un procédé inductif peut mener à une compréhension plus approfondie de ces notions^{xii}.

Malgré ces limites, nous pensons que les effets observés permettent d'avancer quelques implications de la recherche pour l'enseignement de la notion de sujet. D'abord, ils suggèrent que l'enseignement doit constamment s'ajuster aux connaissances antérieures exprimées par les élèves. Ils rappellent également l'importance de faire analyser une variété de contextes syntaxiques par les élèves, c'est-à-dire de leur présenter plusieurs phrases où les sujets se réaliseront et se positionneront de différentes façons. Sur ce dernier point, nous constatons, avec du recul, que la séquence didactique conçue pour la recherche comportait quelques faiblesses à cet égard : le sujet se réalisant en un GN dont l'expansion est un GN (réalisation 5) ainsi que le sujet inversé (position 4) n'étaient, à notre avis, pas suffisamment représentés dans nos exemples.

Nous précisons que ces implications peuvent également s'appliquer à l'enseignement d'autres notions grammaticales. En effet, la méthode inductive suivie dans le cadre de notre intervention n'est pas propre à l'enseignement de la notion de sujet. Elle se veut une façon d'amener les élèves à construire d'autres connaissances, grammaticales notamment, mais aussi dans d'autres disciplines.

Nous pensons finalement que l'intervention didactique conçue suivant une méthode inductive peu exploitée dans les écoles québécoises pourrait être une prémisse à des travaux plus élaborés avec un échantillon élargi et issu de milieux divers.

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ⁱ Les résultats présentés dans cet article proviennent d'un mémoire de maîtrise (Beaulne, 2016) disponible à l'adresse suivante: <http://www.archipel.uqam.ca/9338/>. Ainsi, certains passages, dont les tableaux, reprennent en tout ou en partie des éléments présentés dans le mémoire. Ce mémoire s'inscrit dans un projet de recherche intitulé *Impacts d'une intervention didactique sur les connaissances et les raisonnements grammaticaux d'élèves de 1re secondaire à propos de la notion de sujet* (subvention FRQSC octroyée à Isabelle Gauvin, professeure, UQAM).

ⁱⁱ L'astérisque qui précède une phrase indique qu'elle est agrammaticale.

ⁱⁱⁱ Les données proviennent de l'analyse de questionnaires remplis par 801 enseignants (pratiques déclarées) et de l'observation en classe de 4 enseignants (pratiques effectives). Les constats formulés par Lord doivent donc tenir compte des limites associées à ce type de méthodologie.

^{iv} L'ensemble de la séquence didactique pourra être consultée au <http://www.archipel.uqam.ca/9338/> (annexe B).

^v Nous ne mentionnons que l'encadrement au singulier dans l'article ; un sujet pluriel sera bien entendu encadré par *ce sont... qui*.

^{vi} Nous disons *essentiellement* parce que dans l'une des classes témoins, l'enseignement prévoyait l'observation de quelques phrases. Toutefois, l'observation de chaque phrase ayant une visée précise pour les notes de cours et les interventions se faisant surtout dans le but d'obtenir la bonne réponse, l'enseignement ne s'appuyait pas sur les

connaissances des élèves pour déterminer la prochaine intervention didactique. La leçon était donc donnée comme prévu, peu importe les connaissances exprimées par les élèves.

^{vii} Comme la méthode inductive requiert généralement plus de temps qu'un enseignement traditionnel, nous avons choisi de ne pas contrôler cette variable, avec les limites que cela représente.

^{viii} Le lecteur intéressé à connaître en détail la démarche de validation pourra consulter le <http://www.archipel.uqam.ca/9338/> (point 3.1.2.3).

^{ix} Des tests non paramétriques sont utilisés pour vérifier les effets de l'enseignement sur les groupes (expérimental et témoin) et sur les temps (prétest, posttest 1, posttest 2) pour les analyses relatives aux réalisations du sujet. Nous y reviendrons au moment d'aborder ces résultats.

^x Au primaire, les élèves apprennent à reconnaître le sujet se réalisant en un pronom inversé (phrase interrogative) seulement.

^{xi} Étant donné qu'il y a 3 comparaisons de temps (prétest / posttest 1 / posttest 2), le nouveau seuil de significativité est de 0,017 (0,05 divisé par 3, pour les 3 temps).

^{xii} Merci à un évaluateur/une évaluatrice de l'article qui a attiré notre attention sur cet élément.

Contemporary Canadian Verse-Novels for Young People: Calling for Classroom Research on an Increasingly Popular Literary Form

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Abstract

This qualitative content analysis identified patterns and trends in a contemporary set of Canadian verse-novels for young people. Twenty-two books were located in our search for titles published between 1995 and 2016, and many of these emerged as award-winners in various contexts including the Governor General's Award for children's literature (text). Dresang's notion of Radical Change, adapted for this interrogation, illuminated particular elements of these societal artifacts worthy of notice. In particular, the verse-novel form seems to be on the rise for young Canadian audiences, with predominantly female authors offering texts that range from realistic fiction (most common) to historical fiction and fantasy (least common), in first-person present-tense narratives that generally feature teenage protagonists. Readability conventions noted include various types of headings, strategic use of fonts and stanzas, and the inclusion of additional information that supports deep comprehension of the subject matter. While studies have occurred regarding other textual forms or formats in relation to reader response, specific work with the verse-novel and its use with struggling and reluctant readers is very limited, with professional articles appearing in place of research-oriented discussions. In the current study, scrutiny of available verse-novels is an important contribution as our findings may open a door for further exploration of these resources with participants in classroom settings. Implications for further research with students in schools are discussed in detail.

Introduction

Verse-novels, a form evolving from classic texts such as Homer's *Illiad*, are advancing as poetic narratives within the field of children's and young adult literature. We define the verse novel as a book-length story in poetry format and, judging from the 22 contemporary Canadian titles interrogated in this current research study, verse novels are managing to present rich and powerful stories in succinct ways. Van Sickle (2006) identifies three subcategories within this emerging genre: the poetic singular voice, the dramatic monologue, and the multiple voice, and each one carries expectations that may relate to the creation, readability, and evaluation of verse novels. Alexander (2005) provides an overview of the publishing history of verse novels and spotlights the manner in which verse novels are generally presented in short sections, each with its own heading or title that is sometimes the name of the character if multiple voices are present. Because of the visual and immediate language—not exclusive to verse-novels, certainly, but common—verse-novels are often strong choices for reading aloud and this, combined with their potential for

enhanced readability related to independent decoding, may make them a rich and versatile classroom resource.

This research study was developed to identify contemporary Canadian verse-novels for young people and then interrogate these novels for current patterns and trends in form and content. The study set was collected through a variety of methods to achieve the group of 22 titles. Following the collection of books, content analysis was conducted utilizing emerging categories, including definitions of genre adapted from Kiefer (2010), as well as criteria based on Dresang's (1999) work on Radical Change—the notion that books for children are evolving with respect to forms and formats, perspectives, and boundaries.

Content analysis has been specified as a “careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings” (Berg, 2009, p. 338). This process of content analysis involves the “simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content” (Merriam, 1998, p.160). We also applied an adapted version of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model for conducting thematic analysis in a step-by-step manner. Working to become familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes, were stages completed prior to presenting the themes in this article.

The categories the researchers in this study employed in content analysis were thus determined by a combination of both inductive and deductive means (Berg, 2009; Merriam, 1998), utilizing Dresang's (1999) ideas about Radical Change relating in particular to changing forms and formats in books of the digital age, as well as other categories inspired by previous studies on Canadian novels for youth (Brenna, 2010, 2015). See Appendix A for a copy of the initial analysis chart that was applied to each book. In addition to these headings, notes were also taken under “Other” for additional information that emerged during the reading of the set of books.

Definitions and Summary of the Literature

Cullings' (2015) doctoral dissertation identifies that there is very little published work regarding novels in verse. According to Alexander (2005), the verse-novel is a “new phenomenon in the world of children's literature” that is “becoming increasingly apparent” (p. 269). However, as Campbell (2004) notes, “A long story told in verse is probably the prototype for all literature, but this approach to storytelling faded away with the appearance of the prose novel in the eighteenth century” (p. 1).

Cullings' (2015) definition of verse-novels describes a text where “the entire story is told in the form of non-rhyming free verse. Very often each section is less than a page in length and only rarely more than two or three pages. Usually each of these sections is given a title to orientate the reader, which may indicate the speaker, or contextualize the content, or point to the core theme. The form lends itself to building each section around a single perspective or thought or voice or incident” (p. 270). Alexander also indicates that such a definition is “elastic, since...it is still evolving” (p. 270). While Alexander's article references the growth of the verse-novel in Australia and the United States, with its prominence in Australia further verified by Holland-Batt (2013), and with some indication that verse-novels are also beginning to appear in the United Kingdom (Alexander, 2005), there is little focussed discussion on the body of available Canadian work or its impact in classrooms, a gap in scholarly discourse which this current study is intended to identify.

While large-scale studies of Canadian work are lacking in relation to the rise of verse novels, there are a number of available explorations of particular titles and content. Van Sickle's (2011) book chapter on three verse novels, for example, includes Kevin Major's (2003) *Ann and Seamus*, focusing on how landscapes and elements of the natural world are included as integral to plot and characterization. Kokkola's (2016) analysis, while not relating to Canadian content, also highlights the importance of nature, opening further a possibility that the verse novel form may lend itself to sensory feedback from the world around us, just as Michaels' (2003) discussion interrogates images of "home." Other work (e.g., Campbell, 2004; Sieruta, 2005) addresses the validity of verse novels and issues of assessment.

While surprisingly little academic study can be located in relation to the use of verse-novels in classroom settings, especially where the Canadian context is concerned, a number of professional articles are available that recommend this increasingly popular narrative form. Verse Novels have thus been extensively described as useful materials for today's classroom (Angel, 2004; Cadden, 2011; Campbell, 2004; Gallo, 2006; Leiper-Estabrooks, 2011; Napoli & Ritholz, 2009; Rose, 2012; Scales, n.d.; Schneider, 2004, 2012; Vardell, 2014). Verse novels are discussed in particular as supports for English literacy classes (Angel, 2004; Cadden, 2011; Campbell, 2004; Leiper-Estabrooks, 2011; Napoli & Ritholz, 2009; Rose, 2012; Scales, n.d.; Schneider, 2004), and also in relation to social justice topics in the classroom (Vardell, 2014).

One reason for the popularity of verse novels in the field of Education, according to professional discussions, relates to their unique form in verse (Angel, 2004; Cadden, 2011; Scales, n.d.; Schneider, 2004), which makes verse novels not only materials for poetry learning, but also offers an engaging form of story in order to develop students' imaginations. In terms of the use of verse novels, Angel (2004) and Scales (n.d.) suggest that teachers can employ verse novels to introduce poetry studies. Assisted by strong connections to characters and situations in verse novels, it is even suggested that through verse novels, readers can turn into poetry lovers (Leiper-Estabrooks, 2011). Actual classroom research is required, however, in order to identify whether verse novels really do pave the way for the enjoyment of poetry.

Verse novels are specifically listed as important materials in poetry writing classes (Schneider, 2004, 2012). In terms of assisting teachers, verse novels are suggested as instructional supports to garner ideas for teaching poetry writing (Schneider, 2004). Also, Schneider (2004) suggests that verse novels assist with classroom management, as interest is kept through the study of several poems in each class while at the same time the story is moving forward. Again, classroom studies that look further at link to Education—for example, through enhanced classroom management and student attention—are highly recommended.

According to Cadden (2011), the uniqueness in verse novels is that novels in verse offer a connection among three different genres: drama, poetry, and novels, although this view may be problematic when we consider how many texts in addition to verse novels blend all of the above. Nevertheless, as Cadden notes, verse novels may be a powerful way for students to develop understanding and comprehension of different genres, assisting appreciation of contemporary literature that involves multiple genres or media.

In addition to supporting studies of poetry and multigenres, because a verse novel is composed of short passages, it is discussed in the professional literature as promoting students' imaginations towards fully and vividly understanding the novel as a whole (Angel, 2004; Scales, n.d.; Schneider, 2004). Since not all the details are written in the text, students can employ their own imagination to "fill the blanks" (Scales, n.d., para. 10), developing inference skills.

Verse novels are also listed in many professional articles as appealing reading materials for students, especially struggling readers in the class (Angel, 2004; Leiper-Estabrooks, 2011; Napoli & Ritholz, 2009). Napoli and Ritholz (2009) pose that verse novels can maintain struggling readers' interests in reading through easily understandable language and established personal connections between readers and characters. The connections between readers and the characters in verse novels are described in relation to feelings such as those which might appear when reading someone's personal diary (Napoli & Ritholz, 2009; Winship, 2002).

In addition, in Angel's (2004) article, verse novels are described as widely and appealingly utilized in classrooms because they are short and easy to read for students. While this description is not necessarily accurate with respect to all verse novels, it may be correct to suggest that fewer words in most verse novels, as compared to prose novels, result in more expedient decoding by readers, although the amount of thinking required can equate to similar time on task in terms of deep comprehension. Novels in verse can appear deceptively simple, and research on young readers' comprehension strategies in regard to verse novels would be highly informative.

Angel (2004) suggests that another reason for welcoming verse novels into schools is that students may already be familiar with their forms, as these readers may connect them, in terms of their layout, to song lyrics which are increasingly available online. Angel concludes that such familiarity promotes the acceptance of verse novels among young readers, although in depth research is also necessary here to validate this statement.

In addition to increasing students' interest in reading, verse novels are discussed as assisting students in tests (Rose, 2012). Focusing on Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA), Rose (2012) noted that verse novels can be good materials for increasing young readers' familiarity with literary devices which frequently appear in testing situations. A bonus here could be that verse novels often provide a diverse and large number of literary devices in one book (Rose, 2012), and yet so might prose novels and poetry; further differentiation is required if we are to isolate verse novels as particularly beneficial for reasons of test scores or mastery of literary knowledge.

Murphy (1989) identifies that the verse novel, like its counterpart in prose, is continuing to evolve, and as such, a conceptualization of the verse-novel must remain conditional, relative, and developing. It appears critical to take stock of verse-novel characteristics in current time periods, noticing common patterns and themes, as well as considering trends over time through ongoing analysis. It is also important to explore the effects of verse-novels with students, however in order to do so, researchers are well advised to understand the status of the field generally, with information about verse-novels currently available. So, then, emerges this study as a summary of available Canadian verse-novels for young people, and content therein, in order to inspire and advance further research in classroom settings. As Campbell (2004) questions, prompting us to go further, "...do the kids really like these books?" (p. 4).

Methodology

Qualitative content analysis was chosen as a process for data collection in this comprehensive survey of contemporary Canadian verse-novels. Such content analysis was developed as a "careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings" (Berg, 2009, p. 338). This process of content analysis resulted in "simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (Merriam, 1998, p.160). Inductive as well as deductive means were thus applied to derive categories for investigation (Berg, 2009; Merriam, 1998). See Appendix A for the data analysis chart.

The book set of 22 titles (see Appendix B) was achieved through multiple sources. These sources included: word-of-mouth; the responses of 68 Canadian publishers to query emails; use of the WorldCat Encyclopedia; and reviews from the online *CM Magazine* as well as articles and reviews in *The Canadian Children's Book News*. Efforts were made to interrogate only Canadian materials, using Canadian publishers and Canadian authors as the two required conditions for including books in the study set. It was the intent of the research team to locate and analyze all of the Canadian verse novels published since 1995, with the goal of identifying patterns and trends over a twenty-year period, although our study set did extend into titles published in early 2016.

Titles considered for our study, but not included, are Jenn Kelly's "Jackson Jones" series, published in 2010 and 2011. Although Kelly resides in Ottawa, her verse-novels are published by Zonderkidz, an international publisher rather than specifically Canadian. Perhaps contrarily, another Ottawa author's work, *5 to 1* by Canadian writer Holly Bodger, was included in the study set, because the American publisher, Knopf, has a Canadian counterpart. One other title considered but disqualified was Anne Carson's (1998) *Autobiography of Red*, as it was written for adults. While some of the titles we have included do include prose as well as poetry, at least half of each book involves poetic forms, and most of the titles on the list are composed entirely of poetry.

Following individual content analysis applied to books in the study set, results were compared to explore differences as well as similarities. Patterns in the data as a whole were identified, along with trends emerging from one decade to the next. Limitations in results may be attributed to the qualitative nature of the analysis, with individual researchers operating through a personal interpretive stance. In addition, particular Canadian verse-novels may have been missed although diligence was applied in attempting to achieve a complete sample of books in print.

Findings

General Patterns and Trends

The publication of Canadian verse-novels appears to be increasing, with Figure 1 (below) identifying this trend. Before 2010, approximately one verse novel was published each year since 2003 (with none in 2004) while beginning in 2010, three have been published each year (except for 2012). By the time of this study, in early 2016, one verse novel had already been published with the potential for more by year's end.

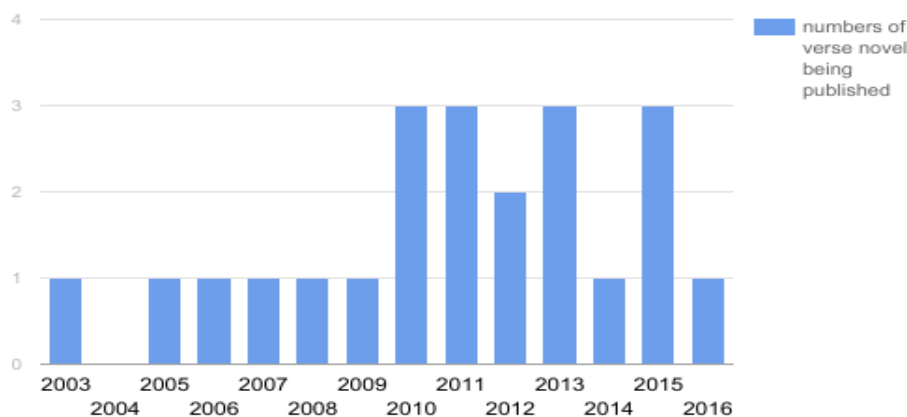


Figure 1: Number of Canadian Verse Novels Published Each Year

Interestingly, almost all of the verse-novels were written by female authors, with only three male authors in the mix (one of whom published two of the books) compared to thirteen female authors (two of whom published two books each, with another one publishing four books each). Another interesting finding relates to genre: twelve of the verse-novels are realistic fiction; five are historical fiction; one is a blend of historical fiction and fantasy due to the inclusion of a ghost character; another one is a blend of realistic fiction and fantasy; and three fantasy titles appear. Of these three fantasy titles, one is a dystopian fantasy, one is a modern fairy tale/fantasy blend, and another one is a humorous contemporary fantasy. In contrast to the humor of the latter two fantasy titles, both written in rhyming couplets by the same author, all of the other books rely on serious subject matter, a common and striking pattern in the set of verse-novels, with one title, Green's *Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles*, offering some opportunities for comic relief through the characterization of a spoon-stealing grandmother.

It is anticipated that classroom study could support and deepen the social justice potential inherent in many of these 22 titles. *Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles*, for example, presents a secondary character with cystic fibrosis whose role is to inspire the book's protagonist to live in the present even as her parents demonstrate a possibility of divorce. Other titles that involve secondary characters with disabilities include Fullerton's (2010) *Burn*, provoking questions about ability in relation to primary versus secondary characters.

Settings that invoke social consciousness appear in a number of titles including Fullerton's (2008) *Libertad*, a story that can inspire discussions about illegal immigration. Bodger's (2015) *5 to 1*, a dystopian novel set in futuristic India, presents themes on gender selection and arranged marriage well worth classroom consideration and debate. Ostlere's (2011) *Karma*, another title set in India but during the 1984 assassination of Indira Gandhi, elicits responses on religion and cultural conflict. Porter's (2005, 2011) novels *The Crazy Man* and *I'll Be Watching*, both placed in historical, rural Saskatchewan, present aspects of prejudice worth considering carefully in today's climate, while Leavitt's (2012) *My Book of Life by Angel*, one of the most gripping titles in the set, introduces child prostitution. Bullying appears as a common theme in many novels, including Phillips' (2010) *Fishtailing*, MacLean's (2013) *Nix Minus One*, and Choice's (2013) *Jeremy Stone*, while suicide appears in Fullerton's (2007) *Walking on Glass* as well as in her previous (2006) title *In the Garage*.

Perhaps most striking is that most of the 22 titles under investigation carry multiple themes of a highly serious nature, offering the opportunity for in depth classroom discussion and response to important topics. These serious themes will be discussed again later in this article with respect to the activation of critical literacy (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

Patterns also appear relating to the target audience-age and other story choices that include point-of-view, story tense, character age, and character gender. In terms of audience, most of the titles—evaluated for complexity of language as well as content— seem geared towards a wide reading age, with only one title, Weston's (2013) rhyming fairy tale fantasy *Prince Puggley of Spud and the Kingdom of Spiff*, limited to readers younger than twelve. Two of the titles, Porter's (2005) *The Crazy Man* and Green's (2016) *Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles* are deemed suitable for eight-years-old and up, and a great many of the titles seem appropriate for later elementary school as well as high school-age and older, potentially operating as crossover young adult/adult material. Leavitt's (2012) *My Book of Life by Angel*, chronicling the story of a fictional young prostitute working Vancouver's downtown Eastside at the time of the Pickton murders, is one such potentially crossover title.

In terms of point-of-view and story tense, the group of verse-novels appear overwhelmingly in first person present tense, with only two titles—both Weston’s (2008, 2013) and comprised of rhyming couplets—written in third-person past tense, and another title—Leavitt’s (2012) *My Book of Life by Angel*—written in first-person past tense. Character age tends towards the high teens, while a few titles present secondary characters through even older adult voices. There is only a slightly higher number of female characters in this set of books as compared to male characters, interesting in comparison to the number of authors who are female (thirteen female vs three male).

Many of the stories unfold as journals or diaries, or otherwise personal writing such as what Ostelere’s (2011) character Sandeep keeps in a notebook. Similarly, Weston’s most recent title is framed as a memoir by the grandmother of one of the characters. In contrast, Phillips’ (2010) book is developed as poetic assignments written by each of the four characters for a high school English class in addition to two other voices: their teacher and a guidance counsellor. Almost all of the books have received reviews of excellence, and higher numbers of these 22 books than what might be expected from a disparate group of texts are award winners. Three of the 22 are Governor General’s (GG) Award winners, with four others appearing on the GG shortlist. Numerous other titles have received Canadian Library Association honours, or awards such as the Geoffrey Bilson Award for historical fiction as well as provincial award recognition.

It is interesting to consider the prevalence of award winners in this set of books. Awards for contemporary verse-novels are evident in other countries, as well. Kwame Alexander’s *The Crossover*, a story about twin brothers who are basketball stars, won the 2015 Newberry Medal from the American Library Association. *One*, Sarah Crossan’s title about conjoined twins, recently won the 2016 Carnegie Medal, the most coveted children’s book prize in the United Kingdom. Because of the small number of verse-novels published worldwide, it seems interesting that so many of them are notable award winners.

Other intriguing findings appear in relation to conventions for readability. Rather than a particular formula for supporting comprehension, each author/publishing team seems to have developed individual strategies for their respective books, although several commonalities appear: use of headings (section titles, chapter titles, and titles of individual poems); use of font, stanzas, and additional pages to support clarity; and use of conventions to set up dialogue.

Headings

Many of the books set each separate poem on a new page, with the title at the top in bold and/or larger and/or different font from the rest of the poem, and reserve a single or double page for chapter or section titles. Sometimes titles of poems are repeated, and flagged as repeated, serving to enhance connections, as in headings from *The Apprentice’s Masterpiece* (Little, 2008): “Commission (1)” (p. 28) and “Commission (2)” (p. 96). Major’s (2003) *Ann and Seamus* uses the first sentences or phrases of each poem as the title, and this line appears in capital letters at the top of the poem without additional spacing afterwards. Similar in technique related to poem titles, Maclean’s (2013) *Nix Minus One* employs, in bold, the first words, phrases, or sentences that lead in to each poem, with an extra space between this connecting title and the rest of the poem. For example, this book’s first installment appears like this:

I'm puffing up the hill

to Swiff Dunphy's place,
delivering a letter from our PO Box
that should've gone in his. (p. 1)

In multiple voice verse-novels, such as Phillips' (2010) *Fishtailing*, clarity is sometimes enhanced further as each separate poem is titled with the name of the character who is speaking. Similarly, Weber's (2011) *Yellow Mini*, with a cast of 13 characters, presents the name of each character under the title of their poems, while Pignat's (2014) *The Gospel Truth* includes the phrase "according to..." and the name of the character, beside each title. In addition, the titles of poems in *The Gospel Truth* are distinguished by wider spacing between their letters in comparison to the spacing between letters in the words of the poems themselves.

Other books, such as Ostlere's (2011) *Karma* and Bodger's (2015) *5 to 1*, establish voice through naming the sections or individual chapters with the character's name. Some of the books employ section titles in creative spots, either as running headers or, in one case (*The Apprentice's Masterpiece*) as horizontal reminders running down along the right-hand side of each page. In *The Apprentice's Masterpiece*, as well, titles of each separate poem appear in the left margin of the same line in which the poems begin. Weston's (2008, 2013) verse-novels separate the story into more traditional chapters that unfold in stanzas comprised of rhyming couplets. Prendergast (2013, 2014), in the bodies of her series' books *Audacious* and *Capricious*, employs reverse white brushstroke font on black patches for the chapter titles, and poem titles in bold black capital letters, clearly distinguishing these headings for readers.

Font

In one of the books, Leavitt's (2012) *My Book of Life by Angel*, more traditional titles are not used for chapters or individual poems, just quotations from *Paradise Lost* on full pages that lead into each section of the book. The first letter of each poem is bolded, a subtle yet effective way of separating the poems from each other, and, as with the other books, the beginning of each poem always occurs on a new page.

In addition to differing font sizes between headings and the body of the text, font changes are also used throughout the text for a variety of reasons. Italics are fairly commonly used (i.e., *Jeremy Stone*; *I'll Be Watching*) to flag situations where characters remember lines from reading materials or recall dialogue, as well as to emphasize individual words or phrases. Similarly, capital letters and font size are both used to create emphasis. For example, in *Capricious* (Prendergast, 2014), Genie says to Ella, "*But what on EARTH is your sister wearing*" (p. 59). In *Zorgamazoo* (Weston, 2008), varying sizes of font are often used to catch the reader's attention.

Font is also used to flag the inclusion of languages other than English, as in pale type for the Spanish titles that flag poems repeated entirely in Spanish in Fullerton's (2008) *Libertad*.

One other use of font towards keeping track of the speaker occurs when both Phillips (2010) and Weber (2011) utilize different types of font to flag particular characters. In Weber's *Yellow Mini*, this occurs along with background colour, where one character's contributions occur entirely as black print on a gray background.

Stanzas

All 22 books in the set employ stanzas, with spaces between, rather than continuous lines. The stanzas themselves support reader comprehension as through their organized content they illuminate the progression of key ideas. Like many of the other authors of these books, Prendergast

(2013, 2014), for example, uses short stanzas with spaces between each, much as a writer might devise paragraphs, and includes additional spacing as line breaks when the thinker or speaker changes. Another unique treatment of stanza capability appears in Green's (2016) *Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles*. Here, the author includes onomatopoeia flush left, italicized, in its own brief section:

Beep.

Beep (p. 176).

In addition, Green (2016) also inserts stanzas in play script formatting, representing Bailey's imagined speeches with an inanimate object.

Variations on stanza length can also be found in works like *Jeremy Stone* (Choyce, 2013) and *I'll Be Watching* (Porter, 2011), where the authors present single words in a line for emphasis. Both of these books also employ indented lines for emphasis or as a strategy to connect ideas, enhancing understanding, while other verse-novels, such as *The Apprentice's Masterpiece* (Little, 2008), insist that each line begin flush left.

The most striking example of stanza length and spacing appears in Leavitt's (2012) *My Book of Life by Angel* (p. 80-82), where at a particularly grim point in the story as Angel's pimp brings in a new, younger child as a prostitute, each phrase of the continued narration appears on separate pages: "...an angel. (page break) A little one. (page break) A little girl. (page break). Another example of stanza size that enhances comprehension is in reference to the character of Addie in *I'll Be Watching* (Porter, 2011); small Addie's voice is heard in particularly spare lines of limited number (i.e. p. 109).

Bodger (2015) alternates free verse stanzas with sections of prose, helping readers distinguish between the two first-person voices that carry this story through the style of their contributions. Fullerton (2007) alternates between two voices where BJ writes in prose and Alex enters thoughts into a poetry journal. Phillips (2010) includes between her free verse stanzas the occasional memo between an English teacher and a guidance counsellor, and Sherrard (2013) includes a prose "Letter to Dad.docx (conclusion)" (p. 197) as the very last entry of the novel.

The general use of short, economical lines, particularly noteworthy in books for younger audiences age ten and up, such as *The Crazy Man* (Porter, 2005) and *Burn* (2010), is another support for comprehension as readers can digest key ideas without the extraneous vocabulary of syntax. Because all of these verse-novels emerge from a first-person point of view, formal metric patterns may take second place to the rhythms of ordinary speech, something that Campbell (2004) notes more generally in terms of the precedence of natural language.

Walking on Glass (Fullerton, 2007), for example, for ages 14 and up, commonly displays three or four words per line, and an average of ten lines per page that invoke concrete images, supporting relatively easy decoding of tremendously complex subject matter about teen violence, parental suicide and assisted death. *Fishtailing* (Phillips, 2010) is another verse-novel written for older readers ages 14 – 17, and deals with teen bullying, violence, rebellion, alcoholism and suicide, in contributions as short as three lines, with poems rarely extending beyond a single page.

Additional Pages

Some of the verse-novels include sections of information such as prologues (*I'll be Watching*; *The Apprentice's Masterpiece*) or maps on the fly leaf (*Libertad*) that set up the action or report necessary historical details related to story background. Other books (*Libertad* included) present additional information in an *Author's Note* at the end, particularly if it is interesting but

not crucial to understanding the story. Occasionally, key terms are also defined through introductory pages (*The Apprentice's Masterpiece*) rather than relegated to a glossary at the end of the book. Weber's (2011) *Yellow Mini* includes sketches, sometimes as full-page spreads, to represent key aspects of the action. Similarly, seven of Canadian artist David Blackwood's prints are included in Major's (2003) *Ann and Seamus*, complementing the story by reflecting action occurring in the text placed opposite.

Dialogue Conventions

One of the trickiest aspects of format in verse-novels involves dialogue. Unlike standard paragraphs, where indenting and quotation marks, as well as commonly including the name of the speaker, are conventions readers learn through experience, the formatting of dialogue in verse-novels has occurred through many book-specific techniques. For example, in *Jeremy Stone* (Choyce, 2013), understanding of the speaker during sections of dialogue between Jeremy and his mother, when he discovers her lying on the living room floor, is enhanced by spacing the conversation in left and right columns.

Are you okay?	Yes.
She sounded annoyed.	
What are you doing?	I'm meditating.
	Just shut up so I can
	meditate. (p.36)

Sections in two-voice format also appear in Ostlere's (2011) *Karma*, with one voice left-aligned and the other voice right-aligned. Sherrard's (2013) *Counting Back from Nine* offers similar spacing with respect to texting that occurs between two characters.

Reading Comprehension and Critical Literacy

With respect to reading comprehension and the complexity of these 22 verse-novels, it appears that difficult subject matter is generally communicated through minimal yet rich vocabulary, presenting perhaps simpler reading in terms of the process, yet accompanied by demands on higher-level thinking. The critical reading experience of most of these verse-novels will involve serious expectations around making inferences, with a necessity that readers interpret between the lines as time and speaker change between individual pieces of text and sections of text. This reliance on inferencing to achieve deep comprehension is similar to what is expected in graphic novels, where readers must invent the action occurring between panels. It means that while the actual number of words, and straightforward decoding time, may be shorter than for regular novels, the thinking and interpretation involved requires depth and complex processing.

In some of the verse-novels, repetition of particular words and phrases appears that might double as both aesthetic accoutrement, activating rhythm, and comprehension support, where the repeated words operate as a placeholder while the reading brain skims ahead to predict the new text while simultaneously resting on the familiar. Ostlere's (2011) *Karma*, for example, includes lines like the following: "How to begin. / Click. / How. To. Begin. / Click. Click. Click. / I like the sound of a ballpoint pen. / Click. Click. Click. Click. Click (p. 4)".

The use of concrete poetry in works like Fullerton's (2010) *Burn* is one other way that comprehension is advanced, with the shape or style of the text reinforces its meaning. For example, words such as "floats through the air" (p. 42) is written on an ascending line, and the word

“disappears (p. 43) is written in faded type. *Jeremy Stone* also offers word pictures, as in the following example:

but
he
thinned
down (p. 13).

Another author who occasionally includes this kind of concrete poetry is Bodger (2015), with inclusions such as “A n#mber” (p. 7), although critics have listed this technique as potentially distracting from the line of her story. One of Weston’s books, *Prince Puggly and the Kingdom of Spiff* (2013), presents concrete poetry on almost every page, enthusiastically embracing every possible use of this technique. Critical literacy also accelerates deep comprehension when readers combine decoding with evaluative social thinking. This practice is conceptualized by Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys’ (2002) four dimensions framework regarding critical literacy: “(1) disrupting the commonplace, (2) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (3) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) taking action and promoting social justice” (p. 382). The serious themes of Osteler’s (2011) *Karma* and Leavitt’s (2012) *My Book of Life by Angel* present voices and subjects previously unheard in children’s literature. Asking students to consider these and other books in a critical literacy framework might be highly productive. Another classroom focus could involve literary awareness of forms and formats, with students asked to evaluate and experiment with stylistic choices. How different is a story presented in prose narrative? In rhyming couplets? In free verse? Asking students to transpose a story from one form to another, and consider the results, might be an insightful critical thinking activity related to author choices and styles.

Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

According to Radical Change, Dresang’s (1999; 2008) notion of how children’s literature is changing over time in relation to digital age innovations, changes in forms and formats, perspectives, and boundaries can be seen in contemporary North American books for young people. The increase of verse-novels can be contextualized within the discussion of forms and formats, acknowledging how various techniques such as word-pictures (Dresang, 2008) are appearing in this framework along with the provocative inclusion of silence through empty spaces on the page. In addition, verse-novels also seem to lend themselves to changing boundaries and changing perspectives, as demonstrated by the integration of very serious subject matter in a great number of the titles in this study set.

In addition to the influence of current technologies on children’s text and illustration, an increasing awareness of supports for struggling readers also impacts book production, with research needed in relation to the verse-novel and reading comprehension. While studies have occurred related to various text types and struggling readers (e.g., Rasinski et. al, 2016), specific work on the verse-novel and its use with struggling and reluctant readers is limited, with professional articles appearing (e.g., Raybuck, 2015) in place of research-oriented discussions.

Combined with ideas about the simplicity of verse novel texts, in terms of decoding, serious subject matter, as well as the necessity of interpreting multiple formatting conventions, may cause a difference of opinion when analyzing verse novels for difficulty. What could be seen by some as a simplistic or easier version of a story may, in fact, be of equal or greater difficulty in terms of

the demands on a reader's thinking—although the sum of the number of words in verse novels may indeed be less than their prose narrative counterparts.

We encourage further research into the potentiality of verse-novels with particular groups of readers. We are interested, for example, in whether the amount of print on the page has an effect on reading comprehension for populations of struggling readers or learners for whom English is a second language. Does the emotional punch carried by many verse-novels engage reluctant readers in ways other texts do not? Do particular ages or genders of readers gravitate towards verse-novels when opportunities for self-selection are offered?

We also encourage explorations of metacognitive reading comprehension strategies students apply before, during and after the reading of verse-novels, and comparisons of these strategies to reading behaviors attached to other forms such as regular narrative novels and graphic novels. What aspects of verse-novels make meaning easier or harder for students to access? Do verse-novels really demand more inference-making, through gaps in the lyrical narrative? And what types of instruction support comprehension and enjoyment related to verse-novel reading?

Considering another avenue for research, what is the relationship between access to verse-novels and the reading and writing of other types of poetry? Do verse-novels really offer a bridge to poetic forms in more productive ways than individual poetry selections can provide?

We are cognizant that school resources are hugely important, and that choices are critical related to selecting children's literature for the classroom, especially if we are to engage and instruct contemporary students in the most productive ways possible. Attention to the verse-novel in its capacity to support lifelong readers as well as carry us to new heights of classroom instruction, for a variety of purposes, is highly recommended. The success of verse-novels, evident through their increased publication and their numerous literary awards, beckons us towards an excellent opportunity to ask and answer important questions about their potential application in schools.

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Appendix A: Verse-Novel Content Analysis Chart

Book Awards	Story and time frame*	Setting*	Parents*	Changing Boundaries*	New Perspectives.*	Conventions for Read-ability*	Format*	Point of View*	Audience Age*	Genre*	Main Character(s) Name/ Age/Gender	Title/Series? Author Name & Gender/Year

**Notes were also taken for “Other” regarding additional information

Specific Analysis Criteria Relating to *:

*Genre: Realistic Fiction; Historical Fiction; Fantasy-animal; Fantasy-human based in real world; Fantasy-human based in other world; Science Fiction; Mystery; Non-fiction; Narrative non-fiction; Other (specify)

*Audience Age: Birth-7; Junior 8+; Intermediate 11+; Young Adult 14+; Adult (for multiple audience, include all e.g., J/I/YA)

*Point of View: First Person/Third Person; Present/Past Tense

*Format: Sequential/Non-sequential in terms of time

*Conventions for Readability (specify): Header? Chapter Titles? Use of Italics for...? Bold Print for...? etc.

*New Perspectives (specify): Multiple Perspectives; Previously Unheard Voices (e.g.: exceptionality; minority culture; dialect; minority sexual orientation; occupation; socio-economic level)

*Changing Boundaries (specify): Subjects previously forbidden; new Settings; Unresolved Endings

*Parents: 1/2; specify marital status

*Setting: Landscape (urban, rural, unknown)/Context (Canadian, non-Canadian, unknown)

*Storyframe: Days/Weeks/Months/Years/Unknown; Timeframe: Contemporary/Past/Unknown

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Accessing a ‘Very, Very Secret Garden’: Exploring the Literary Practices of Children and Young People Using Participatory Research Methods

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Abstract

Despite the wealth of publications on the participation of children and young people in research, the connections between participatory research methods (PRM) and literacy studies remain unclear. This paper aims to understand why it is particularly pertinent to use PRM in literacy studies (particularly New Literacy Studies). In order to capture the complexity and plurality of these methods, we discuss two studies: one conducted with children (ages 7-10) in Santiago, Chile and the other with young people (ages 16-30) in Québec, Canada. We argue that by using PRM, researchers can support participants in the appropriation of an alternative and potentially empowering view of literacy.

Keywords

participatory research methods; New Literacy Studies; children; young people; voice in research; literacy practices; views of literacy

Introduction

While there is an ever-growing body of literature on the participation of children and young people in research, as well as the various interpretations of the concept of participation itself (for instance Hart’s, 1992 ladder of participation and subsequent adaptations; Tisdall et al., 2014) little attention has been paid to the connections between participatory research methods (PRM) and literacy studies. We, as researchers, had recurring discussions about what it meant to use participatory research methods in literacy studies. Despite the wealth of publications on participation in research, the connections between the two fields remain unclear. Beyond the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), we felt that there were other reasons why participation in research was particularly suited for literacy studies with children and young people. Our paper links current concerns associated with the participation of children and young people in research with core themes of literacy studies, specifically the New Literacy Studies (NLS).

Throughout this article, we use the term participatory research methods (PRM) to describe the extensive range of activities that are aimed at involving participants in research. Drawing on our own experiences of using PRM to look at children’s and young people’s literacy practices, this paper also aims to understand why it is particularly beneficial to use such methods in literacy studies. In order to capture the complexity and plurality of these methods, we analyse two studies, one conducted with children in Santiago (Chile) and the other with young people in Québec (Canada).

Based on our review of the literature in both fields (NLS and PRM), we have identified three key themes, all closely interlinked, that serve to inform our understanding of participation in literacy studies:

1. Domains of life and boundaries
2. Giving a voice to children and young people
3. Challenging dominant narratives

These three themes are introduced in tandem with the explanation of the data, as we feel that this format best facilitates our theoretical and epistemological discussion of PMR as it is directly informed by our empirical data. Before discussing the themes, we offer a brief overview of the PRM literature and present a NLS perspective on PRM. We conclude by offering some thoughts about the links between NLS and PRM.

Participatory Research Methods with Children and Young People

There is an abundance of literature on participatory research with young people and children (Clark, 2005; Clark & Moss, 2011; Winter, 2006). Some of this work is rooted in the field of childhood sociology (Sommer, Pramling, & Hundeide, 2010) while substantial literature is located in the broad field of educational studies. Most studies draw on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) in order to explain their uses of PRM (Finlay, Sheridan, & Soltyssek, 2013; Fleming, 2010; Holland et al., 2010; Petrie et al., 2006). The convention prompts researchers to reflect on ways to respect and involve young people in research, and to consider them as contributing subjects rather than merely objects of observation.

Participatory research can be rooted within minority and social rights, community empowerment, and democratic research (Hodge & Jones, 2000; Blumenthal, 2011). Epistemologically speaking, within PRM researchers conceptualise children and young people as social agents (Mason & Hood, 2011). However, children's agency should not be compared to adults' agency. James and Proust (1990) argue that children 'are not active in the ways in which adults are active' (p.4). Also, as Horgan (2016) stresses, childhood is not a homogenous phenomenon and can be experienced in a plurality of ways in diverse contexts and countries. She also adds that young people's rights cannot be detached from their 'social, economic and cultural contexts' as these directly affect 'the judgement of what is important to children and young people and also how children's voices are constructed' (Horgan, 2016, p. 3).

Beyond international legislation, Fleming (2010, p. 210) explains that there are four main reasons for using the PRM approach with young people: it causes researchers to always question the purpose of their study; it highlights power dynamics between researchers and participants: 'asking in whose interests it is being done' (ibid.); it encourages researchers to think about how their work can change the lives of children and young people; and it allows researchers to potentially have a more rigorous understanding of the context of their study by involving 'young people as "experts by experience"' (ibid.). Holland et al. (2010) argue that 'participatory research can make a central contribution, in providing an ethical, epistemological and political framework and in the potential for rich "findings"' (p. 360). PRM do not aim at producing 'better' data, but rather focus on creating a more equal power distribution and the enrichment of the data and findings.

From a methodological point of view, there are a wide continuum of understandings (see Hart, 1992) and ways of applying the participatory paradigm (Holland, Renold, Ross, & Hillman,

2010). Some researchers consider participatory studies as those in which young people and children have simply been invited to take part (ibid.). In contrast, others involve young people and children in the ethical approval, design, data collection, analysis, writing (e.g. Petrie, Fiorelli, & O'Donnell, 2006) as well as dissemination stages of the research. Because of the changing nature of academia (for instance, funding bodies' expectations and time constraints, see Jeffrey and Troman, 2004) it is becoming increasingly difficult to adopt a participatory approach during all stages of a study (Franks, 2011). It is particularly challenging to involve children and young people in the design, ethical approval, and analysis stages. Franks (2011) suggests a 'pocket of participation' approach where children and young people are consulted as to when and how they would like to engage in the study.

Christensen (2004) notes that modern ethnographic research—in which participant observation is used—is fundamentally participatory because it involves a complex and constant negotiation of roles and power relationships between the researcher and the participants which do not necessarily fit the traditional adult-children power relationship. Cheney (2007, 2011) calls child-centred ethnography a participatory ethnography in which the main concern is 'to create spaces for meaningful participation to challenge broader structures of power' (Cheney, 2011, p. 167). Participatory ethnography is transformative (Cheney 2011), however, how this transformation occurs is part of the research process itself and the study, the researchers and the participants can be changed by it. This process of change might also underline the unpredictable nature of doing research with children and young people, which causes researchers to be more flexible and creative (Finlay et al., 2013).

In this article, we consider that a study is using PRM when it involves children and young people at different research stages and considers them as active participants. Doing so signifies that young participants are offered an opportunity to take ownership of the study (or of parts of it) through appropriate activities that can include, but are not limited to, talking, drawing, creating objects, playing, writing, taking pictures, leading visits, and many others depending on their interests.

New Literacy Studies and PRM: A Brief Overview

This section describes PRM in relation to the New Literacy Studies (NLS), as it is important to establish a genealogy of the use of the PRM approach in literacy studies in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of its affordances and relevance to the field. According to Barton (2001), the NLS was developed in response to purely cognitive conceptions of what is reading and writing in academia and in society. From a theoretical and methodological perspective, the NLS were inspired by several traditions surrounding literacy studies: 'teacher research in schools', 'community publishing', 'community development and popular education' as associated with Paulo Freire, feminist studies, 'oral historians', and educational action research (Hamilton et al., 1992, p. 107).

NLS researchers have used diverse approaches and methods to understand literacy practices from a sociocultural perspective. Historically, ethnography has been the preferred methodology (Papen, 2005) because it allows researchers to represent participants' perspectives in real-world settings and with a multi-method approach (Hamilton, 1999). However, ethnography, as it has traditionally been understood, does not 'fully represent the perspectives of [the ethnographers'] informants' (ibid., p. 431), and researchers' perspectives in general are often more dominant than the participants'. This concern has been taken into account in different ways, and

some NLS researchers have addressed it with various approaches and methods. Hamilton et al. (1992) explain that:

[p]articipatory research and action is the logical model for literacy work because of the philosophy behind the teaching and because learning literacy is about creating knowledge (in Freire's words: reading the world); strengthening voices that have been silenced (writing who you are) and telling others what you have discovered (reaching an audience). (ibid., p. 115)

Later, Barton and Hamilton (1998, p. 5) further describe the PRM approach as 'transformative' and 'emancipatory' but they distinguish it from action research. They explain that '[c]rucial to a social approach to literacy is the fact that people make sense of it and that their conceptions of the nature of reading and writing affect their learning and use. The collaborative methodology is a logical extension of this approach' (ibid., p. 66). In order to achieve these goals, they developed a 'collaborative ethnography' where they explored different strategies for involving participants in the collection, decision making, analysis and interpretation of data (Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Hamilton, 1999). During the data collection phase, they invited participants to collect documents and take photographs of their daily life. They then further involved them by inviting participants to discuss and analyse different types of data: interview transcripts, researchers' preliminary analysis (themes), and to prepare a 'pen-sketch of themselves' (Barton & Hamilton, 2012, p. 66). Barton and Hamilton diversified the range of research methods in adult literacy studies, adding a collaborative dimension to the ethnographic approach used in earlier studies (see Heath, 1983; Street, 1984).

More recent studies address the issue of participant involvement and use a variety of methods, such as photographs taken by participants themselves (Hodge & Jones, 2000), and literacy diaries kept by participants (Marsh, 2003). In a project called 'Literacies for Learning in Further Education' (LlLFE) (Ivanič et al., 2009) various creative and participatory methods were used in order to explore the role of literacy in the lives of college students (e.g. an icon mapping activity, clock activity, floor plan activity, and photographs). Mannion and his colleagues (2007) explain that these methods are a 'useful way of understanding the embodied situated and spatial experience of the respondent's world' (pp. 21–22). With traditional ethnography, these dimensions could be difficult to address, but as these examples show, there is a growing interest in understanding how literacies move across different contexts and spaces (Kell, 2006; 2011). One of the affordances of the PRM approach is that it can potentially give researchers an insight into these movements, and also into the ways people are reinterpreting literacies throughout time and across spaces.

Within a sociocultural view of literacy, a few studies have used PRM to study the literacy practices of children and young people. The work of Pahl and Rowsell (2010, 2011) on 'artifactual literacies' is a good example of innovative methods used with toddlers, children, and teenagers. Pahl and Allan (2011) argue that participatory research contributes to building an understanding of literacy coming from young people's perspectives. PRM encourage the participants' involvement because they can construct and shape the methods that inform this vision (Pahl & Allan, 2011, p. 193). Abbot and Gillen (1999) also emphasise the relevance of involving children under the age of three during data collection and in later stages of research. They explain involving participants allows them to create occasions for knowledge co-construction and challenges traditional views of literacy.

A wide range of methods are used to involve participants in research and enable them to undertake the role of ‘ethnographers of their own experience’ (Ivanič et al., 2007, p. 707). Even though different literacy studies have used several terminologies (e.g. collaborative research, democratic research, collaborative ethnography, etc.), they can all be situated under the umbrella of PRM. For example, Marsh (2004) set out an animation studio for four-year-old children in which they created animated films. Once the films were created, she discussed with the children their perceptions of digital compared to more traditional forms of literacy. Another example is the multi-method approach used by Clark (2005) and Clark and Moss (2011) that documented the narratives of five to seven-years-olds using digital technologies (Warren, 2008). We argue that these methods—without being framed as participatory—can be considered as PRM as they encourage children’s active participation in research and have been described as ‘frameworks for listening’ to young children (Clark & Moss, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, through our literature review we have identified three themes that are currently debated in the NLS and PRM fields: 1) Domains of life and boundaries, 2) Giving a voice to children and young people, 3) Challenging dominant narratives. We present the literature review related to these three themes alongside our discussion of the data. Before presenting the themes, we introduce our two studies.

Brief Overviews of the Two Studies

The studies we refer to in this article were developed in two very distinctive contexts and involved participants of different age groups. Margarita’s study was conducted with children in Chile, and Virginie’s with young people in Québec (Canada). Yet, our studies are linked by a shared concern for—and understanding of—how to conduct research in a way that breaks the imbalance in the distribution of power between the researcher and the participants. In both of our studies, this issue is especially relevant as we worked with children and young people facing economic and social difficulties. In these contexts, the use of PRM provided us the opportunity to involve the research participants in a respectful way which in turn impacted the richness of our data. For both studies, PRM were at the core of the data collection process and the participants’ involvement was a concern that informed all the different stages of the research.

Since they involved children and young people, both studies had to provide strict ethical protocols which were reviewed and accepted by FASS Research Ethics Committee at Lancaster University. The two studies also shared additional similarities, as they both required planning for fieldwork in a different country (Chile and Canada) from where we were based (UK). Both studies involved a lot of long distance travel and communication via emails with the selected field sites. Pseudonyms are used in this paper to protect the identities of the people and organisations referenced. As both studies were carried out in different languages (French and Spanish), verbatim translations are used in this article.

In other respects, the two studies were carried out in highly contrasting contexts. For example, the participants in both studies belong to different age groups and cultural backgrounds, their experiences of schooling were dissimilar (e.g. still in school versus not attending school anymore), and they had contrasting relationships with their families and social networks (e.g. living with family members versus living on their own). Margarita’s study was conducted in two schools located in two different local government districts of Santiago, the capital of Chile. Margarita’s study focuses on understanding the role of literacy in so called ‘disadvantaged environments’ and the interplay between home and school-based literacy practices and writing. Approaching the study of literacy from a social perspective, this research takes into consideration

social practices and beliefs related to reading and writing (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984). PRM methods were adopted in order to involve the community (parents, teachers and students) and understand their literacy beliefs and literacy practices. Data collection was carried out between August and December 2012 and the study participants were 7- to 10- year-old pupils. The research design was framed within an ‘Explanatory Design-participant selection model’ (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutman & Hanson, 2003). In the first stage, 228 children (in 6 classes) were asked to write or draw on a topic of their choice and to answer a set of multiple-choice questions on their beliefs about literacy and literacy practices. The second stage used PRM in a focussed case study involving 19 children and some of the adults involved in their literacy-related activities at home and school.

Virginie’s study was conducted in two community-based organisations—here named Le Bercail and L’Envol—in Québec, Canada. The main research aim was to understand the relations between the literacy practices used in community-based organisations and those of the young people who attended their activities. The community-based organisations participating in this study offered services to young people aged 16 to 30 who experienced difficulties in various areas of their lives such as employment, accommodation, family and social relationships, mental and physical health, and drug and alcohol consumption. The services offered varied from a youth shelter for runaways, supervised apartments, structured workshops, artistic and cultural activities (e.g. art gallery and theatre), to career and counselling services. Virginie’s study involved two main phases of data collection. The first was conducted in April-May 2012 and consisted of an intensive period of participant observation, focusing mainly on group activities. In addition, 21 participants were interviewed individually (14 young people and 7 youth workers). The second phase took place in mid-April 2013 and involved five group workshops organised as a form of ‘member reflection’ (Tracy, 2010) with eight young people and six youth workers. The majority of the participants who took part in the second phase also participated in the first one.

Discussion of the Data

In the following sections, we explore three key themes: 1) Domains of life and boundaries, 2) Giving a voice to children and young people, and 3) Challenging dominant narratives. Our discussion of these themes intertwines elements of literature review with empirical data.

Domains of Life and Boundaries

Several studies have documented children’s and young people’s literacy practices across different domains of life, generally across home and school (Heath, 1983; Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell, & Drury, 2014; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These studies highlight a considerable mismatch between what young people from low socio-economic backgrounds are doing with literacy at home and the kind of practices used and valued at school. This type of study requires researchers to access the intimate lives of participants: visiting their homes, talking to their families, seeing personal artefacts, etc. By doing so, literacy researchers can understand how literacies move across different domains of life—what Kell (2011, p. 613) calls the ‘traffic of texts’—as well as how they are interpreted and used differently depending on the context. From a PRM perspective, accessing participants’ private lives can represent an important challenge. What if the young people do not want to let us in? What if they do not want to show us everything?

A youth worker in Virginie’s study mentioned that young people would rarely show her their personal writing (such as personal diaries, poems, love letters, etc.). She said that these were like a ‘very, very secret garden’ for young people. Another youth worker in the same study also

mentioned that if young people shared such texts it would be a clear sign that the youth worker had managed to create a strong relationship of trust with them. Christensen (2004, p. 172) explains the importance of being “let in” on secrets, particular games or “dubious” practices by children’ during fieldwork. This requires spending time with the young people in order to build positive relationships with them.

Margarita conducted home observations with children in Santiago, Chile. During these visits, the children became guides to their ‘own territory’ (e.g. home and backyard) and only some of the children allowed Margarita to visit their bedrooms. Prior to those visits, Margarita had spent time with the children in their classroom and had negotiated the terms of the visits with the children and their parents. This echoes Coad and her colleagues’ (2015) work about home observations. They explain the importance of early engagement with the children before the home visit so that the children can feel listened to and considered:

Giving the child free rein to lead the conversation means that all the authors of this article have been introduced to an array of pets, important toys or other pursuits such as computer games or videos. Although time consuming, it is important to convey to the child that their individual thoughts and experiences are valued before the more formal part of the interview is started and data are collected. (Coad, Gibson, Horstman, Milnes, Randall, & Carter, 2015, p. 436).

The children in Margarita’s study showed her a great variety of belongings such as toys, computers, books, videos, magazines, etc. and anything they considered important (as exemplified by Figure 1).



Figure 1. Bernardita’s favourite toys

While this sharing yielded information that did not necessarily contribute to the aim of the study—observing home literacy practices—it showed that trust had been established and contributed to the solidification of Margarita’s relationship with the children.

Conducting fieldwork on various sites also means that as researchers we are entering places with a different ‘social geometry of power and signification’ (Massey, 1994, p. 3), that is to say where people have different roles, power relationships, experiences, perceptions, etc. This relates to what Horgan (2016) mentions about contexts shaping children’s and young people’s judgement and voice (see also Spyrou, 2011). For example, when working with children contacted through the school system, Margarita took into consideration that the child might have felt pressured or obligated by the school to participate in the study. This issue was approached by giving the children enough autonomy and creating a safe space where the children were able to state their concerns or express their unwillingness to participate either in the full study or certain parts of it. Similarly, Virginie conducted research interviews with some young people in their flats, but always offered a public place as an alternative in case they felt uncomfortable with showing her their home.

Accessing children’s and young people’s various domains of life can be challenging, but once a researcher has access to the young people’s intimate lives, how can they make sure that their voices are being heard? We suggest that it entails more than just letting them lead the visits or interviews; it requires truly engaging in dialogue.

Giving a Voice to Children and Young People

Hamilton (2012, p. 61) explains that the idea of giving voice to a group of people is used as a ‘way of talking about political participation and power sharing’. Pyett (2002) mentions that the voices of ‘vulnerable or marginalised’ groups are generally not heard in society and often they are given limited power during the research process. From our perspective, giving voice also implies offering opportunities for children and young people to talk about what is really important to them and to be listened to, not only by researchers but also by a larger audience that could include teachers, parents, policy-makers and others in positions of authority. From a literacy studies point of view, this signifies taking into account what young people and children consider important in terms of literacy in their everyday lives. The NLS has a long tradition of looking at everyday life literacy practices (for example, shopping lists, form filling, train timetables, etc.) and not only literacy practices that are valued at school or in the job market (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Papen, 2005).

Central to the process of giving voice is to initiate a dialogue or a conversation with the young people. According to Christensen (2004), researchers have to understand and enter children’s ‘cultures of communication’ in order to create a fruitful dialogical research process. Similarly, Ulvik (2014) considers conversation as central to participation in research and suggests ‘three possible analytical perspectives on the relation between conversations and participation: conversations as means for participation, participation as a theme for conversations, and conversations as a form of participation’ (p. 196).

Dialogue and conversation were central to both of our studies. In the initial interview with each child, Margarita tried to make them feel at ease by validating and encouraging their opinions. At the end of the interview, she asked them to reflect on each of the research questions. By doing so, Margarita intended to promote the children’s voices in the research. This strategy proved to be fruitful as following the individual interviews, the children were visibly more confident. Throughout the study, Margarita sustained this dialogical process with the children in the formal research contexts and also through informal conversations carried out at school events or other

occasions. Margarita's understanding of the children's cultures of communication in her study was facilitated by her knowledge of the context. Her own schooling experience was similar to that of the children participating in the study. She also grew up near one of the participating schools, which also informed her understanding of the research context and children's cultural background. Yet, Margarita took into account the inherent imbalance of power between adult and child in a research context (West, 2007).

Virginie's study used literacy artefacts during the interviews with the young people. Virginie asked participants to bring an object related to their personal use of literacy. For example, some showed her a personal diary, a book, poems, a mobile phone, a tattoo, etc. The participants then explained what the object was and why it was significant to them. This method was inspired by Pahl and Rowsell's work on 'artifactual literacies' (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Pahl, 2004). The use of literacy artefacts during the interviews provided a way of exploring what young people see as important in terms of literacy in their life and to enter their 'cultures of communication' (Christensen, 2004). This method was useful in both collecting rich data and in building better relationships with the participants. By talking around a literacy artefact, Virginie had the opportunity to better understand how young people's literacy practices evolved through different spaces, time periods, and interactions with members of their social networks.

Our studies confirm that literacy is a topic closely attached to people's perception of themselves. Barton and Hamilton (1998) in their landmark study '*Local Literacies*' note that '[t]he idea of reading and of being a reader was imbued with values, just as the idea of writing and being a writer was.' (158) Participants compared themselves to others saying that they were 'good readers', 'avid readers' or were more 'doers than readers' (ibid.). These perceptions can be deeply engrained in people's understanding of themselves as learners since literacy and education are generally closely associated with one another (Papen, 2016). This relationship with literacy (or *rapport à l'écrit*, Besse, 1995) originates in early childhood and is subsequently shaped by people's experience at school but also in other domains of life (family, leisure, work, friends, etc.). It is also largely influenced by the dominant narratives about literacy skills and what counts as literacy in society.

Challenging Dominant Narratives

In her book entitled '*Literacy and the Politics of Representation*', Hamilton (2012, p. 2) looks at how 'literacy is imagined and embedded within everyday practices and how it is implicated in the ordering of social life'. She uses the term 'narrative' to refer to stories and representations that people believe in and circulate about literacy. She explains that: '[s]ome of these narratives are so familiar that it is difficult to get beyond them and the contradictions they embody to think in a fresh—perhaps more effective—way about the power of the written word' (ibid., p. 3). Papen (2016) mentions that the most common view of literacy is to consider it as a set of skills—knowing how to read and write—that must be acquired individually. This narrative is currently dominant in Western societies and is largely encouraged by large scale literacy surveys and tests (e.g. PISA and PIAAC) that categorise people on a 'ladder' based on what they cannot do rather than what they can do with literacy (Tett, Hamilton, and Crowther, 2012, p. 2). The skills view of literacy is dominant in schools and, more often than not, teachers and learners also adopt (perhaps unconsciously) this perception. Hamilton (2012, p. xiii), reflecting on years of work in literacy studies mentions:

I have met the pervasive view of literacy colonised by education as a skill to be ‘banked’ (in Paulo Freire’s terms) and worked over many years to articulate an alternative theory of literacy as social practice. Once people become familiar with this theory, it changes perceptions and is welcomed by learners and teachers. But the ideas have to be explained to those outside of the field over and over again, so strong is the hold of the dominant discourse (the schooled literacy approach) on the contemporary imagination. (ibid.)

This signifies that what young people and children consider important in terms of literacy in their lives is likely to be influenced by this dominant skills view perspective. This raises important issues from a PRM perspective; how can we as researchers access young people’s ‘authentic voices’ (Spyrou, 2011)? As NLS researchers, how can we present some alternative narratives to the dominant skills view of literacy without imposing such perspectives on the participants?

Margarita had to face such a dilemma during her fieldwork. The children and their parents (or guardians) perceived school literacies as the standard of good practice at home. They discouraged any practices that were not related to school and relegated their understanding of learning to the school practices. In this sense, they challenged Margarita’s vision of literacy (which could be framed within a sociocultural approach). Margarita and the participants had to come to a common understanding of the meaning of literacy and the purposes of the study. The vast majority of the children expressed their opinions about preferring a more functional view of literacy (e.g. reading textbooks or completing school writing tasks) that only occasionally included a sociocultural understanding of it. In this context, the participatory dimension was a vital tool for the researcher in coping with this issue. By making the participants aware of the relevance of their everyday literacy practices (e.g. during home visits), they felt more accepting towards them. Margarita’s dissemination stage included a leaflet that presented a co-constructed view of literacy. The leaflet had a double purpose: to disseminate this understanding of literacy and provide guidance about how to improve students’ performance (which was related to the children’s and parents’ concerns), and to empower the children and parents by validating their practices and thoughts. This leaflet was distributed at the general annual school meeting. Margarita’s study worked as a bridge to promote a better understanding between the parents, the school, and the pupils.

Another example of the negotiation of a co-constructed view of literacy can be found in Virginie’s study. She organized a workshop with the young people that aimed to map their literacy practices and to help them understand the literacies they associated with various dimensions of their lives. This specific activity was strongly inspired by the LfLFE project and their ‘Icon Mapping Exercise’ (Ivanič et al., 2009; Mannion & Miller, 2005). The young people were divided into small groups of two or three. The groups received a pile of images representing different literacies. They were then asked to classify the pictures according to the different domains of their lives with which they associated the images. Virginie encouraged the young people to draw their own lines between the different domains of their lives. They were free to use any wording they wanted to describe these domains. Figure 2 shows a map created by three young men at L’Envol—Cédric, Jacques and Richard.

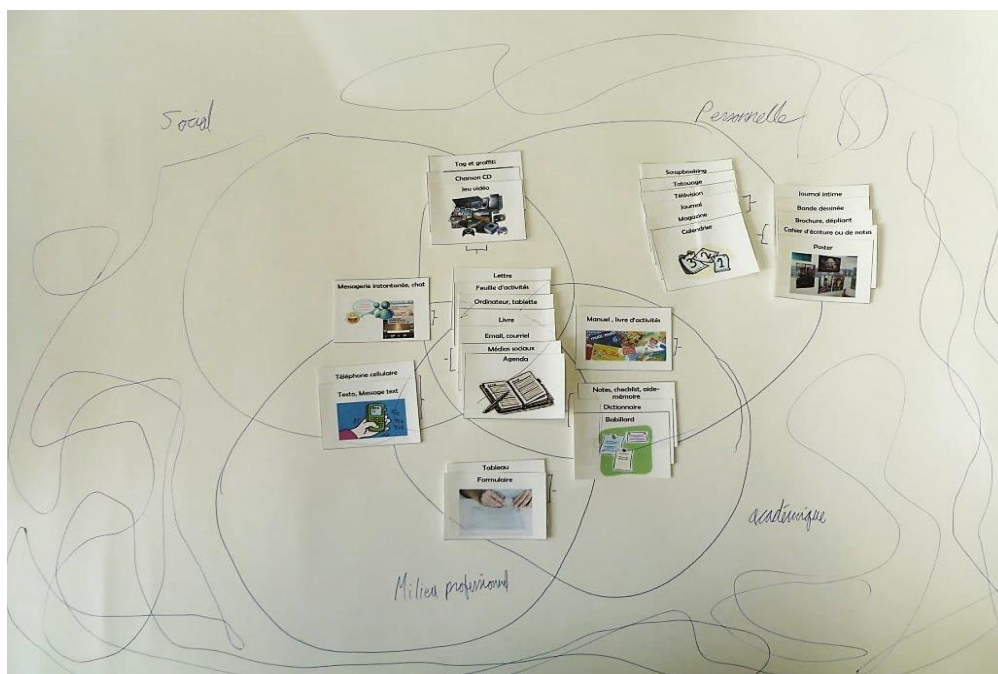


Figure 2. Literacies and domains of life according to Cédric, Jacques, and Richard

After these activities, the young people were invited to analyse their map and to draw some conclusions about it. Virginie and the young people then turned to the theory, discussing some of the concepts (for instance, literacy practices) in a more informal way. The young people's analysis was very rich and interesting. For example, Cédric explained that 'literacy is mainly a form of communication', even in the case of tattoos. He observed that, depending on the context, people will use and value literacy differently. Cédric added "Literacy is present in all the domains of your life, and this, whoever you are". This made him wonder about 'illiterate' ("*analphabètes*") people and how they can cope with literacy demands in their everyday lives. Despite the fact that the young people's analysis highlighted the importance of the social nature of literacy, a skills view of literacy was also present in their narratives. Some young people categorised most of the cards under the 'school' domain. They were also surprised about some of the cards distributed at the beginning of the activity (e.g. tattoos) and did not understand how or why they were related to literacies. Virginie's cards influenced their analyses and guided them toward a more sociocultural understanding. The comment made by Cédric about 'illiterates' might also suggest that literacy was conceived as a set of skills that one has or does not have. This suggests that the young people's representations of literacy, prior to the activity, were primarily influenced by a 'schooled literacy approach' (Hamilton, 2012, p. xiii).

In light of our research experiences, it is important to also take on board these more functional perspectives of literacy and not to look down on them in a judgmental way. As explained in the example taken from Margarita's study above, a dialogical process needs to be undertaken in order to negotiate a co-constructed view of literacy which also includes the participant's concerns. PRM can be used, as in Virginie's example, to present a broader view of literacy which can open up alternative narratives about literacy and its importance in young people's everyday lives. From our point of view, a concern that underpins NLS work is to make sure that people, and in this case children and young people, do not come to think that they are not readers, writers, and more generally good learners because their literacy practices are different from those at school. PRM

allow NLS to present alternative narratives while considering children's and young people's plural perspectives on literacy.

Conclusion

Involving participants in research is an important concern for NLS researchers, and this paper has shown that participatory methods can be used in various positive ways, using different terminology and strategies. We argue that there is a need to be more explicit about using a participatory stance in order to put forward the participatory dimension of literacy studies. This paper argues that even though several terminologies (e.g. collaborative research, democratic research, collaborative ethnography) have been used in literacy studies they can all be situated under the umbrella of PRM. PRM are suitable to support literacy studies since they allow participants to explore different narratives about literacy. This is particularly relevant considering that a skills view of literacy still prevails in schools and in society in general, especially in discourses about people from so-called 'disadvantaged' backgrounds. By using PRM, researchers can support participants in the appropriation of an alternative and potentially empowering view of literacy.

Politically and epistemologically speaking, PRM can contribute to giving a voice to people who are not usually represented in public narratives. Public and policy narratives about children and young people from so called 'disadvantaged' backgrounds frequently make assumptions about these young people's lives, problems, and skills, especially literacy or language-related ones (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2015). PRM can offer possibilities to counteract these disempowering discourses and highlight children's and young people's real literacy needs and uses of literacy. This also relates to Hamilton et al.'s (1992) understanding of the PRM used in their early work. For them, these methods were ways of 'reclaiming voice, breaking silence—allowing perspectives, experiences to be spoken and heard that have not been present in traditional research' (ibid., p. 113). We suggest that PRM also allow participants to position their perceptions, interests and practices right at the centre of the study. In this sense, the role of the researcher is to facilitate, guide, provide tools and support the participants throughout the research in order to give them a voice.

Also, from our experiences, we believe that PRM help in building meaningful relationships. As illustrated by the descriptions of PRM used in our studies, participants felt considered and respected. Some participants directly mentioned to us that they appreciated the way the studies were conducted—specifically the fact that their contributions were taken into consideration. Striving for respectful and equalitarian relationships in research is even more important while working with children and young people. Fleming (2010, p. 215) notes that power relationships tend to be 'superimposed' by researchers onto participants and also from adults to young people. We also believe that power relationships can be emphasized by the precarious situations the children and young people were experiencing. PRM have the potential to counteract this unbalanced distribution of power.

As part of our reflections as researchers using PRM, we understand that engaging in a dialogical research process means acknowledging and respecting that some participants might not be interested in engaging in the same way as we planned and hoped they would. We acknowledge what Finlay, et al. (2013, p. 137) call the 'unpredictability of ethnographic research with young people', meaning that researchers have to be willing to modify their research design in order to address participants' needs and take into consideration their inputs. In our respective research projects, we both experienced situations during which we had to adapt ourselves to the needs

expressed by the participants. By allowing participants to shape the research according to their own interests, we hope that they were able to take ownership of it. Certainly, it is difficult to claim that our studies totally empowered the participants, and we are not assuming this. Yet, we suggest that PRM have contributed to creating a more balanced distribution of power within the studies and also encouraged the participants to value their literacy practices.

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Développer l'enseignement de l'oral au début du primaire : l'impact de deux activités spécifiques en parler-écouter

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Résumé

La didactique de l'oral étant en constant développement, nous avons cherché à savoir quels sont les effets produits par deux activités destinées à travailler l'oral sur les habiletés langagières des élèves de première année primaire (6-7 ans). Quatre classes belges ont été mobilisées : trois pour l'expérimentation des activités et une classe contrôle. Une étude statistique menée sur les résultats des élèves à plusieurs moments du dispositif ainsi qu'une étude qualitative destinée à comprendre la nature des progrès des apprenants démontrent et tentent de dresser la nature des effets positifs observés sur les habiletés tant orales qu'écrites de l'échantillon.

Mots-clés

didactique de l'oral – savoir parler – savoir écouter – dispositif – école primaire

Problématique

Aujourd'hui, de nombreux auteurs (Bergeron et Plessis-Bélair, 2012 ; Bianco, 2015 ; Dumais et Lafontaine, 2011 ; Dumais, Lafontaine et Pharand, 2015 ; Lafontaine, 2013 ; Simard, Dufays, Dolz et Garcia-Debanc, 2010) mettent de l'avant l'intérêt du travail de l'oral dans les classes : la langue orale est un outil qui permet à l'être humain de communiquer; l'oral est présent dans la majorité des situations d'interaction; l'oral est une compétence à caractère transversal qui constitue un atout important pour affronter la vie; l'oral contribue au développement de la pensée, entre autres.

Toutefois, en dépit de l'importance conférée à l'enseignement de l'oral, tant dans la théorie que dans les prescrits légaux, la réalité reflète qu'en pratique, l'enseignement de l'oral est loin d'occuper la place qu'il devrait (Garcia-Debanc et Delcambre, 2003).

Ainsi, si les enseignants sont conscients de son importance, ils se disent démunis pour mettre en œuvre un tel enseignement (Colognesi et Dolz, 2017; Halté et Rispail, 2005). C'est la raison pour laquelle nous nous sommes employés à développer, depuis quelques années, des ouvrages pratiques, destinés aux enseignants du primaire, en savoir écouter et en savoir parler qui proposent de nombreuses activités à mener, par classe d'âge, afin de travailler ces deux compétences transversales de façon spécifique et diversifiée.

Fondés sur des principes didactiques que nous développerons plus loin, ces dispositifs à mener en classe font l'objet de recherche appliquée dans le domaine de l'apprentissage de l'oral.

La question à laquelle nous souhaitons répondre dans cet article est de savoir quels sont les effets produits par deux activités spécifiques, l'une proposée dans l'ouvrage « Ça te parle ? »¹ et l'autre dans l'ouvrage « Ça s'écoute ! »² auprès d'un public de jeunes élèves de première année primaire.

La visée de notre recherche est, d'une part, de montrer si et comment les deux activités expérimentées amènent les jeunes élèves à développer des habiletés d'oralité, mais aussi si et comment elles modifient leurs habiletés scripturales.

Cadre conceptuel

Nous présentons ici successivement ce qu'on entend par le terme « oral », ce que les écrits scientifiques relèvent comme incontournables pour l'enseignement/ apprentissage de l'oral, les pratiques effectives des enseignants et les fondements qui ont dirigé la conception des activités proposées dans les ouvrages « Ça te parle ? » et « Ça s'écoute ! ».

Ce qu'on entend par « oral »

Dans le domaine de l'éducation, l'oral revêt deux statuts : médium ou objet d'enseignement / apprentissage (Dumais et Lafontaine, 2011 ; Lafontaine, 2003). Dans le premiers cas, l'oral a le statut de médium dans ce sens qu'il est utilisé pour transmettre des connaissances, corriger des exercices, poser ou répondre à des questions, etc. Son impact est plutôt faible puisque l'élève ne peut en tirer des apprentissages explicites. Dans le second cas, l'oral est un objet d'enseignement / apprentissage à part entière. L'optique est alors, comme le rappellent Dolz et Schneuwly (1998), de permettre aux élèves de développer, dans des situations de communication réelles et formatrices, des habiletés de communication multiples et variées. C'est cette deuxième conception de l'oral que nous privilégions et dans laquelle nous nous inscrivons : l'oral qui s'apprend et qui s'enseigne, avec une entrée par les genres (Dolz et Schneuwly, 1998).

Dans cette perspective, les Socles de compétences, qui constituent le prescrit légal de l'enseignement primaire en Belgique francophone, précisent que l'enseignement de l'oral doit s'articuler autour de trois composantes. La première revêt de tout ce qui concerne l'expression, c'est-à-dire la production d'un message, le partage de sa pensée par la parole et le corps. La deuxième renvoie aux capacités d'écoute, qui consistent à « mobiliser son attention pour percevoir des signes sonores, verbaux et corporels ; c'est produire du sens en tant que récepteur d'un message » (Socle de compétences : Communauté Française, 2013). La troisième composante implique l'interaction entre les deux dimensions précédentes : le parler et l'écouter, puisque dès lors qu'il s'agit d'oral, des allocutaires sont amenés à être en interaction entre eux.

De la nécessité de l'enseignement / apprentissage de l'oral

Les écrits scientifiques montrent qu'au cours de l'histoire, l'enseignement du français a été traditionnellement centré sur l'écrit et particulièrement sur la lecture (Dolz et Schneuwly, 1998). En effet, Simard et al. (2010) estiment que « l'oral a longtemps été minoré (...), dans la mesure où le système scolaire se donnait comme objectifs essentiels d'apprendre à lire et à écrire et où la grammaire ignorait la syntaxe spécifique de l'oral » (p. 284). Dès lors, l'enseignement de l'oral a rarement été conçu comme un objet scolaire autonome. Cela ne signifie pas que l'oral n'était pas

¹ Colognesi, S. et Deschepper, C. (2016). *Ça te parle en 1re primaire*. Namur : Erasme. pp. 24-30.

² Colognesi, S., Gillet, C. et De Visscher, S. (2015). *Ça s'écoute en 1re primaire*. Namur : Erasme. pp. 110-114.

présent dans la routine de la classe et dans les différentes activités de l'école, mais la place qu'il occupait était plutôt implicite et involontaire. L'oral a toujours été présent à l'école à travers la lecture de consignes, la correction d'exercices, les débats, les présentations orales, les récitations de poésies, les scènes de théâtre, etc. Toutefois, il s'agit d'un savoir non médiatisé et, par conséquent, les activités n'ont pas été conçues pour développer des compétences à l'oral. Au contraire, elles poursuivent généralement un objectif lié au langage écrit. Ainsi, l'oral est une compétence souvent mobilisée, mais rarement enseignée.

Si les auteurs spécialistes du domaine reconnaissent que le développement des compétences à l'oral se fait dès le plus jeune âge et évolue par le biais des interactions sociales à l'intérieur de sa propre famille, l'importance qu'acquiert l'enseignement intentionnel de l'oral à l'école (comme une compétence à développer) semble évident. En effet, en nous référant notamment aux travaux de Bianco (2015), De Vecchi (1999) et Simard et al. (2010), le travail de l'oral dans les classes trouve son intérêt dans différents éléments. Premièrement, la langue orale est un outil qui permet à l'être humain de communiquer avec son environnement social, étant entendu l'omniprésence de l'oral dans la majorité des situations d'interaction. L'oral permet donc de réagir adéquatement aux situations de vies multiples. Deuxièmement, comme le rappelle Bianco (2015), plusieurs recherches en psychologie du langage et en sociologie de l'éducation ont démontré l'existence d'un lien assez étroit entre le développement du langage oral et l'apprentissage de la lecture, et plus particulièrement de la compréhension. Troisièmement, « le langage qu'on développe à l'oral est intériorisé et contribue au développement de la pensée » (Simard et al., 2010, p. 287). À cet égard, nous pouvons dire que l'oral joue un rôle capital pour l'individu, car il concerne la personne dans son intégralité - puisque la production orale ne peut être dissociée du corps et de la voix - et l'oral constitue un levier pour la réussite des élèves, notamment en milieu défavorisé (Lafontaine, 2013) et donc réduire les inégalités sociales (Simard et al., 2010). L'oral, dans ce sens, peut aussi intervenir dans des situations de réflexion sur son action, via des médiations métacognitives (Allen, Lafontaine et Plessis-Bélair, 2016 ; Colognesi et Van Nieuwenhoven, 2016).

Distance entre la théorie et la pratique

Au regard de ces arguments, il apparaît comme évident qu'un travail de l'oral comme objet d'enseignement / apprentissage est nécessaire dans les classes. Garcia-Debanc et Plane (2004) expliquent que « la nouvelle place accordée à l'oral dans les programmes de l'école et du collège suscite des inquiétudes chez les enseignants et pose des difficultés de mise en application » (p. 7).

En effet, si l'école et les enseignants sont tout à fait conscients de l'importance qu'occupe l'enseignement de l'oral, ils se trouvent démunis pour le mettre en œuvre et mentionnent également une insécurité et un manque de formation dans le domaine (Dumais, 2012 ; Halté et Rispaïl, 2005 ; Lafontaine, 2003 ; Simard et al., 2010). Par ailleurs, les praticiens semblent peu maîtriser les caractéristiques de l'oral et, par le fait même, ne peuvent pas aisément déterminer ses objets d'enseignement / apprentissage (Dumais, 2015 ; Messier, Dumais et Viola, 2012).

Les principes directeurs des collections « Ça te parle ? » et « Ça s'écoute ! »

Fondés sur les constats identifiés plus haut, les ouvrages « Ça te parle ? » et « Ça s'écoute ! » visent à offrir aux enseignants des dispositifs d'enseignement de l'oral qui soient explicites et dédiés au développement des compétences en Parler et en Ecouter. Ainsi, dans chaque

ouvrage, les enseignants trouvent des activités qu'ils peuvent mener en classe pour développer les capacités d'oralité de leurs élèves. Ces activités ont toutes en commun :

- une centration sur au moins une compétence / capacité ciblée, un savoir-faire, une stratégie (issus des socles de compétences)³;
- une progression de type « mise en situation / tâche à réaliser / structuration de l'apprentissage / prolongement »;
- des moments d'autoévaluation;
- un ancrage dans des situations de communication variées;
- des étapes métacognitives au fil du travail et à la fin.

Les activités présentent des premiers jets oraux (première écoute, première prise de parole) qui servent des apprentissages visant l'amélioration de cette première épreuve orale via des ré-oralisations possibles, inspirées des réécritures proposées dans le cadre du développement scriptural (Colognesi, 2015 ; Colognesi et Lucchini, 2016).

Questions de Méthodologie

Pour rappel, la visée de notre recherche est, d'une part, de montrer comment deux activités expérimentées amènent les jeunes élèves à développer des habiletés d'oralité, mais aussi modifient leurs habiletés scripturales et, d'autre part, de mettre en évidence la manière dont les élèves ont évolué à l'oral d'une séance à l'autre. En effet, si Plane (2015) mentionne qu'on retrouve une forme de concurrence et/ou de soumission entre l'oral et l'écrit, nous voulions rendre compte, dans le cadre de cette étude, de l'impact que peuvent avoir des activités d'enseignement / apprentissage de l'oral sur la production écrite, en les envisageant de manière complémentaire.

Nous présentons ici succinctement notre échantillon, le dispositif proposé aux élèves, et les techniques de recueil de données. Le dispositif est donc issu de notre collection « Ça te parle ? » (Colognesi et Deschepper, 2016) et « Ça s'écoute ! » (Colognesi, Gillet et de Visscher, 2015) destinée à outiller les enseignants pour qu'ils travaillent l'oral dans les classes. Précisons d'emblée que l'objectif n'est pas de faire la promotion des ouvrages, mais bien de mesurer si les activités qui s'y déploient permettent effectivement de développer davantage les compétences langagières des élèves (en l'occurrence les compétences relatives à l'élaboration des significations et l'association de supports visuels à un message oral) que les pratiques plus communément mises en place par les enseignants, à savoir, pour le savoir parler, les pratiques presque exclusives que constituent la récitation et l'exposé, et, pour le savoir écouter, la pratique du questionnaire. Dans cette perspective, il est important de signaler, à titre de précaution méthodologique, que le travail de recueil de données ainsi que la réalisation de l'expérimentation n'ont pas été menés par les concepteurs des activités des manuels afin d'éviter un effet d'accommodation trop manifeste. La

³ Le document « socles de compétences » (Communauté Française, 2013) est le prescrit légal qui détermine les habiletés à travailler avec les élèves à l'issue de chaque cycle de l'école élémentaire en Communauté Française de Belgique. Pour les Parler / Ecouter, les socles déterminent des compétences spécifiques qui constituent les chapitres des ouvrages en question : (1) j'adapte ma parole / mon écoute à la situation de communication ; (2) j'élabore / j'identifie des idées et je construis du sens ; (3) je construis / je repère l'organisation du message ; (4) je m'intéresse à la progression de l'information, aux liens entre les phrases, aux mots ; (5) je prends en compte la dimension non verbale du message.

chercheuse qui a mené l'expérimentation est entrée en contact avec les enseignants de terrain et a collecté les données en toute indépendance.

Échantillon

Notre échantillon est composé de toutes les classes de première primaire (enfants de 6-7 ans), au nombre de quatre, appartenant à une école choisie parce qu'elle est caractérisée par son milieu socio-culturel très faible (indice socioéconomique de 1⁴).

Nous avons testé le dispositif dans trois des quatre classes, tandis que la quatrième classe a servi de classe contrôle. Le tableau 1 présente la composition de ces quatre classes.

Tableau 1

Composition des classes expérimentales et contrôle mobilisées pour la recherche

	Classe 1	Classe 2	Classe 3	Classe contrôle
Nombre d'élèves	11	14	12	11
Nombre de filles	5	6	7	5
Nombre de garçons	6	8	5	8
Nombre de primo-arrivants ⁵	3	3	1	2

Déroulement du dispositif

L'expérimentation a eu lieu durant le mois de décembre. L'activité proposée aux élèves des trois classes expérimentales comportent trois phrases : les deux premières sont destinées à travailler les compétences à l'oral tandis que la troisième est un prolongement en savoir écrire. Le Tableau 2 donne à voir les différentes phases du dispositif expérimental ainsi que les objectifs et les étapes par lesquelles les apprenants sont passés. Nous avons choisi de tester plusieurs activités en lien avec la littérature de jeunesse, porte d'entrée intéressante pour développer l'oral (Dumais, 2014).

⁴ L'indice socioéconomique d'une école est déterminé par le décret du 30 avril 2009 et modifié par le décret du 9 février 2011 organisant un encadrement différencié au sein des établissements scolaires de la Communauté française afin d'assurer à chaque élève des chances égales d'émancipation sociale dans un environnement pédagogique de qualité. Selon de Villers et Desagher (2011), cet indice se calcule en considérant différents variables (revenu moyen par habitant, niveau de diplôme, taux de chômage, activités professionnelles et confort des logements) et « suit alors une formule de calcul complexe pondérant le poids de chacun de ces indices, menant à un indice synthétique que l'on attribue alors à chaque élève en fonction de son secteur de résidence » (p. 5).

⁵ Un élève primo-arrivant est un élève originaire d'un pays étranger, qui est arrivé sur le territoire depuis moins d'un an et qui se retrouve « sans bagage scolaire ni connaissance de la langue française au sein d'un système éducatif qu'il ne connaît pas » (Décret du 18 mai 2012 visant à la mise en place d'un dispositif d'accueil et de scolarisation des élèves primo-arrivants dans l'enseignement organisé ou subventionné par la Communauté française).

Tableau 2

Étapes du dispositif mis en place

Phase	Compétence, intention générale et stratégies	Détails – Ce que fait l’enseignant	Temps
*Les fiches issues des manuels figurent à l’annexe 1.			
1. Mise en place de l’activité « Les petits délices » (manuel « Ça s’écoute ! »)	<p><u>Compétence</u> : associer à un message oral des supports visuels et auditifs (illustrations, tableaux, schémas, décors, éléments sonores).</p> <p><u>Intention</u> : permettre aux élèves de comprendre un message (en l’occurrence des phrases issues d’un album jeunesse) et de le décoder pour trouver l’illustration qui lui correspond.</p> <p><u>Stratégies à développer</u>: utiliser des indices paratextuels, reconnaître et comprendre le sens des éléments non verbaux et reconnaître et expliquer la pertinence des supports non verbaux.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faire entendre aux élèves une série de phrases issues de l’album jeunesse « Les petits délices » (trois fois). - Demander aux élèves de retrouver, dans une fiche 20.1, l’image qui correspond à chaque phrase et d’expliquer les raisons ou les indices qui permettent de réaliser les appariements phrase – illustration. - Poser plusieurs questions métacognitives aux élèves. 	50 minutes
2. Mise en place de l’activité « Les petites choses qui font du bien » (manuel « Ça te parle ? »)	<p><u>Compétence</u> : construire du sens et élaborer des significations pour construire un message.</p> <p><u>Objectif</u> : permettre aux élèves de construire un message oral court qui développe ce qu’ils aiment faire, les choses qui les passionnent, qu’ils apprécient.</p> <p><u>Stratégies à développer</u> : commenter et s’exprimer de façon subjective sur un thème, construire sa prise de parole en fonction de ce que l’on voudrait dire comme informations et construire un capital de vocabulaire référentiel : rassembler des mots, des expressions, des tournures de phrases, des idées.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faire entendre aux élèves une série de phrases issues de l’album jeunesse « Les petits riens ». - Encourager les élèves à trouver les points communs à toutes les phrases, concluant qu’il s’agit de quelqu’un qui exprime les choses qu’ils aiment faire. - Encourager les élèves à préparer leur propre prise de parole pour exprimer aux autres des choses qui les rendent heureux, des actions qu’ils aiment faire dans la vie de tous les jours à l’aide de la fiche 3.1. - Aider les élèves à être attentifs aux différentes stratégies de prise de parole. - Inciter les élèves à répéter plusieurs fois avant de présenter. - Poser certaines questions métacognitives aux élèves afin de les aider à prendre du recul par rapport à l’activité. 	50 minutes

3. Mise en place du prolongement en savoir écrire de l'activité « Les petites choses qui font du bien » (manuel « Ça te parle ? »)	<p><u>Compétence</u> : construire du sens et élaborer des significations pour construire un message.</p> <p><u>Objectif</u> : permettre aux élèves de construire un message oral court qui développe ce qu'ils aiment faire, les choses qui les passionnent, qu'ils apprécient.</p> <p><u>Stratégies à développer</u> : s'exprimer de façon subjective sur un thème, construire un capital de vocabulaire référentiel : rassembler des mots, des expressions, des tournures de phrases, des idées.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourager les apprenants à construire leur propre livre/album (dans la même logique itérative des albums utilisés). - Guider les élèves à : penser à une phrase pour exprimer ce qu'ils aiment. Ensuite, l'illustrer à travers un dessin colorié et après, ajouter leur phrase sur le dessin (avec l'aide de l'enseignant). - Rassembler tous les dessins et faire une lecture de l'album. 	50 minutes
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La classe contrôle n'a pas suivi ce protocole. L'enseignante de cette classe a reçu uniquement comme ressource les deux albums jeunesse utilisés par les trois autres classes (« Les petits délices » et « Les petits riens »), sans consigne didactique spécifique. Son objectif était, en utilisant ces supports, de travailler l'oral en production et en réception. L'enseignante a essentiellement réalisé une lecture orale de l'album avec, au fil de la lecture, une explicitation de vocabulaire. Elle a aussi fait un jeu de questions-réponses pour vérifier la compréhension et elle a demandé aux élèves de raconter des expériences personnelles vécues en lien avec le contenu de l'album.

Techniques de récolte et d'analyse des données

Pour accéder à l'information qui nous a permis d'analyser l'impact des activités sur les habilités orales et scripturales des élèves, nous avons conçu une procédure comprenant quatre outils de collecte des données : des pré-test, post-test et test intermédiaire, de l'enregistrement vidéo, des grilles d'observation et le recueil des traces des élèves.

Pré-test, test intermédiaire, post-test. En considérant que cette activité avait trois phases présentées *supra*, nous avons appliqué un pré-test, un test intermédiaire et un post-test.

Ces trois tests étaient identiques et consistaient à poser à chaque élève les questions suivantes : « *quelles sont les choses que tu aimes faire ? , quelles sont les choses qui te font te sentir bien ?* ». Nous avons décidé d'utiliser comme test ces questions parce que les trois phases de l'activité ont été centrées sur ce thème et se sont développées à partir de deux albums jeunesse qui racontent, par le biais des phrases itératives, les différents plaisirs que la vie de tous les jours peut offrir. En posant ces questions en amont et en aval du dispositif, nous souhaitions identifier une éventuelle progression dans les réponses des élèves sur le plan du vocabulaire (et de la quantité d'idées évoquées), de la complexité morphosyntaxique et leur éventuelle accommodation au modèle de réponse fourni par les albums. Nous avons interrogé tous les élèves de chaque classe ; ils ont été appelés un par un en dehors de la salle pour répondre oralement aux questions posées. Toutes les réponses des élèves ont été enregistrées et retranscrites. Dans le cas de la classe contrôle, nous avons passé seulement un pré-test avant la phase 1 et un post-test après la phase 2. Il était en effet entendu que ce groupe ne réalisait pas de troisième phase, car cette dernière correspondait à un prolongement en savoir écrire lié à l'activité proposée par l'ouvrage « Ça te parle ? » (*Les petites choses qui font du bien*).

Afin d'évaluer l'impact des différentes phases qui ont été mises en place, nous avons analysé les réponses des élèves à chaque test en considérant les critères suivants : le nombre de mots utilisés, le nombre d'idées, le nombre de mots par idée, le nombre de mots maximal par idée, le lien ou non avec l'album (0 ou 1 point), la structure de la phrase (en attribuant une note allant de 0 à 5 points), la présence ou non d'un groupe nominal prépositionnel (GNP) - (0 ou 1 point) et la présence ou non d'au moins un adverbe (0 ou 1 point)⁶. Ceci afin de voir si le travail oral à partir d'albums (ou d'un album) avait contribué à développer l'élaboration de contenus et la richesse lexicale ou syntaxique des apprenants.

Nous avons appliqué aux résultats un test de la variance ANOVA⁷ auquel nous avons ajouté un test HSD de Tukey-Kramer⁸.

Enregistrement des séquences et grilles d'observation. Les trois séances ont été enregistrées, nous permettant, au visionnage, de nous concentrer, non seulement sur le déroulement de l'activité, mais également sur les indices verbaux et non verbaux produits par les élèves. Pour analyser ces vidéos, nous avons construit une grille d'observation pour chaque activité. Ces grilles ont été élaborées sur la base de la structure (déroulement de l'activité) que les manuels proposaient pour chaque phase et elles visaient, entre autres, à déterminer si les enseignants des différentes classes suivaient le guide méthodologique qui leur était fourni ou s'en écartaient, ceci afin de disposer éventuellement d'outils explicatifs en cas de variation importante des résultats selon les classes. Pour remplir les grilles en maintenant une attitude impartiale et objective, nous avons regardé chaque vidéo à plusieurs reprises. L'idée était d'enregistrer par écrit, et de manière descriptive, ce qui se passait avec les élèves et ce que les enseignants faisaient pendant la mise en œuvre de l'activité.

Les traces des élèves. Outre les outils de recueil déjà mentionnés, nous avons utilisé les traces produites par les élèves afin de compléter les informations et de développer le volet qualitatif de notre étude. Nous avons ainsi collecté les productions des élèves (fiches, dessins, photos et phrases) pour en analyser le contenu (Miles et Huberman, 1994).

⁶ Chaque réponse a donc été transformée en chiffre et encodée en deux grandes catégories et en huit sous catégories : l'aspect sémantique (nombre de mots utilisés, nombre d'idées, nombre de mots par idée, nombre de mots maximal par idée et lien avec l'album) et l'aspect syntaxique de la réponse (structure de la réponse, présence du GNP, utilisation d'adverbe[s]).

⁷ L'ANOVA F, analyse de la variance, compare les résultats obtenus dans les trois temps (pré-test, test intermédiaire, post-test). La valeur de l'ANOVA F nous permet de voir quels sont les items sur lesquels s'observe un changement significatif et à quelle échelle (*0,1-**0,01-***0,001).

⁸ Le test HSD de Tukey-Kramer est complémentaire à l'ANOVA. Il s'agit d'un test de comparaisons multiples destiné à mettre en évidence à quel endroit spécifique se produit le changement significatif. Dans notre cas, ce test indique par exemple si le progrès significatif a eu lieu entre le temps 1 et le temps 2 ou entre le temps 1 et le temps 3.

Présentation des principaux résultats

Pour rappel, notre ambition était de mesurer les effets produits par un dispositif didactique construit pour développer les habiletés orales des élèves, et, le cas échéant, constater si des retombées pour les capacités d'écriture sont possibles.

La présentation des résultats obtenus est structurée de la manière suivante. D'abord, nous présentons les résultats inhérents aux tests statistiques. Cette analyse quantitative nous amène à considérer successivement (1) les trois classes expérimentées en comparaison avec la classe contrôle afin de constater s'il y a une différence générale en termes de progrès ou non; (2) les différents items mesurés pour identifier s'il y a des progrès communs aux trois classes; (3) les résultats obtenus dans chaque classe pour pointer les items qui montrent des progrès significatifs dans chacune d'entre elles. Enfin, nous considérons les données qualitatives récoltées afin de comprendre les chiffres et d'étayer le propos. Pour ce faire, nous mettons en exergue la progression des réponses des élèves dans les différentes variables considérées afin de montrer pourquoi certains aspects sont en progrès dans des classes et pas dans d'autres.

Les résultats des élèves : analyse quantitative

Présentation des résultats quantitatifs. Les tableaux 3, 4, 5 et 6 présentent la moyenne et l'écart-type (mis entre parenthèse sous la moyenne) des résultats obtenus aux variables observées pour les élèves de chaque classe au pré-test, au test intermédiaire et au post-test (sauf la classe contrôle qui n'a qu'un pré-test et un post-test).

Tableau 3

Moyenne et écart-type des résultats obtenus aux variables observées pour les élèves de la classe expérimentale 1

(* : résultat significatif au seuil $p < 0,05$; **, $p < 0,01$; ***, $p < 0,001$; n.s. = non significatif.)

CLASSE expérimentale 1										
Moyennes	Nombre de mots	Nombre d'idées	Nombre de mots par idée X	Nombre de mots maximal par idée	Lien avec l'album Adverbe	Structure	GNP	Adverb	Aspect sémantique	Aspect syntaxique
Pré-test	9,79 (4,1)	3,29 (1,44)	3,50 (1,34)	5,64 (3,3)	0 (0)	2,93 (0,73)	0,71 (0,47)	0,14 (0,36)	20,79 (5,87)	3,57 (1,28)
Test inter	16,43 (7,94)	3 (1,62)	4,21 (1,85)	5,57 (2,77)	0,36 (0,5)	3,57 (0,76)	0,79 (0,43)	0,21 (0,43)	29,57 (13,33)	4,43 (1,55)
Post-test	19 (10,93)	4,6 (2,61)	4,4 (1,14)	6,2 (2,17)	0,6 (0,55)	4 (0)	0,8 (0,45)	0,2 (0,45)	34,80 (14,92)	4,8 (1,1)
ANOVA F (2,30)	4,51	1,63	0,99	0,09	5,59	5,52	0,12	0,12	3,83	2,04
Entre les versions	*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	**	**	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
	entre 1 et 2	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	entre 1 et 3	entre 1 et 3	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

Tableau 4

Moyenne et écart-type des résultats obtenus aux variables observées pour les élèves de la classe expérimentale 2

(* : résultat significatif au seuil $p < 0,05$; **, $p < 0,01$; ***, $p < 0,001$; n.s. = non significatif.)

CLASSE expérimentale 2										
Moyennes	Nombre de mots	Nombre d'idées	Nombre de mots par idée X	Nombre de mots maximal par idée	Lien avec l'album	Structure	GNP	Adverbe	Aspect sémantique	Aspect syntaxique
Pré-test	10,5 (5,23)	3,29 (1,44)	3,5 (1,34)	5,64 (3,3)	0 (0)	3,21 (0,80)	0,71 (0,47)	0,14 (0,36)	22,93 (9,19)	4,07 (1,27)
Test inter	12,86 (9,47)	3 (1,62)	4,21 (1,85)	5,57 (2,77)	0,36 (0,5)	3,43 (1,02)	0,79 (0,43)	0,21 (0,43)	26 (14,65)	4,43 (1,55)
Post-test	19,14 (9,82)	4,29 (1,9)	4,57 (1,4)	6,57 (2,14)	0,29 (0,47)	4 (0,68)	0,93 (0,27)	0,43 (0,51)	34,86 (13,48)	5,36 (1,01)
ANOVA F (2,39)	3,92	2,31	1,74	0,57	3,21	3,24	1,06	1,61	3,35	3,67
Entre les versions	*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	*	n.s.	n.s.	*	*
	entre 1 et 3	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	entre 1 et 3	n.s.	n.s.	entre 1 et 3	entre 1 et 3

Tableau 5

Moyenne et écart-type des résultats obtenus aux variables observées pour les élèves de la classe expérimentale 3

(* : résultat significatif au seuil $p < 0,05$; **, $p < 0,01$; ***, $p < 0,001$; n.s. = non significatif.)

CLASSE expérimentale 3										
Moyennes	Nombre de mots	Nombre d'idées	Nombre de mots par idée X	Nombre de mots maximal par idée	Lien avec l'album	Structure	GNP	Adverbe	Aspect sémantique	Aspect syntaxique
Pré-test	17,33 (11,98)	4,25 (2,22)	4,17 (1,59)	5,83 (3,41)	0 (0)	3,67 (1,44)	0,67 (0,49)	0,42 (0,51)	31,58 (17,11)	4,75 (2,05)
Test inter	25,75 (9,24)	3,42 (1,08)	7,92 (3,29)	9,92 (3,96)	0,75 (0,45)	4,67 (0,65)	1 (0)	0,75 (0,45)	47,75 (15,77)	6,42 (1)
Post-test	18,92 (7,01)	3,5 (1,57)	6,33 (3,63)	7,58 (3,4)	0,33 (0,49)	4,42 (0,67)	0,92 (0,29)	0,58 (0,51)	36,67 (11,17)	5,92 (1,24)
ANOVA F (2,33)	2,59	0,89	4,82	3,89	11,37	3,33	3,33	1,36	3,69	3,91
Entre les versions	n.s.	n.s.	*	*	***	*	*	n.s.	*	*
	n.s.	n.s.	entre 1e et 2 ^e	entre 1e et 2 ^e	entre 2e et 3e/ entre 1e et 2e	entre 1e et 2e	entre 1e et 2e	n.s.	entre 1e et 2e	entre 1e et 2e

Tableau 6

Moyenne et écart-type des résultats obtenus aux variables observées pour les élèves de la classe contrôle

(* : résultat significatif au seuil $p < 0,05$; **, $p < 0,01$; ***, $p < 0,001$; n.s. = non significatif.)

CLASSE CONTRÔLE										
Moyennes	Nombre de mots	Nombre d'idées	Nombre de mots par idée X	Nombre de mots maximal par idée	Lien avec l'album	Structure	GNP	Adverbe	Aspect sémantique	Aspect syntaxique
Pré-test	15,55 (6,07)	4,18 (1,17)	3,73 (1,42)	5,36 (1,36)	0 (0)	4,27 (0,90)	0,73 (0,47)	0,45 (0,52)	28,82 (8,65)	5,45 (1,29)
Post-test	11 (5,66)	3,27 (1,35)	3,64 (1,69)	4,55 (1,57)	0,09 (0,30)	3,36 (1,36)	0,64 (0,50)	0,18 (0,40)	22,55 (8,41)	4,18 (1,78)
ANOVA F (1,20)	3,30	2,86	0,02	1,70	1,00	3,40	0,19	1,88	2,98	3,68
Entre les versions	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
	15,55 (6,07)	4,18 (1,17)	3,73 (1,42)	5,36 (1,36)	0 (0)	4,27 (0,90)	0,73 (0,47)	0,45 (0,52)	28,82 (8,65)	5,45 (1,29)

Analyse des résultats quantitatifs. Premièrement, de façon générale, si nous comparons les trois classes expérimentales avec la classe contrôle, toutes les classes où le dispositif a été testé montrent des progrès significatifs pour certains items, alors que nous n'avons noté aucun progrès significatif dans la classe contrôle, du moins pour les aspects envisagés lors des pré-tests et post-tests. On donc peut émettre l'hypothèse que les activités proposées ont vraisemblablement conduit à un apprentissage et ont eu des effets positifs sur les habiletés orales et écrites des élèves.

Deuxièmement, en observant item par item l'analyse statistique des trois classes expérimentales, les résultats révèlent qu'il n'y a qu'une seule variable qui montre une différence significative commune aux trois groupes : l'item « structure ». Cet item visait à évaluer la structure des réponses des élèves aux trois temps : avant la mise en place de l'activité (pré-test), après les deux phases orales (test intermédiaire) et après la phase écrite (post-test). De plus, le test HSD de Tukey–Kramer met en évidence que, dans le cas de la classe 3, le changement significatif s'est produit entre les temps 1 et 2 (pré-test et test intermédiaire), ce qui signifie que, dans ce cas, la mise en place des deux phases orales a été suffisante pour observer un progrès significatif en ce

qui a trait à la structure des réponses. Or, il est important de mentionner que les résultats obtenus aux temps 2 et 3 permettent de montrer que les effets positifs des phases 1 et 2 ne se perdent pas en passant par un prolongement de l'activité sur l'écrit et, qu'au contraire, ils ont tendance à se maintenir. Dans les classes 1 et 2, les changements significatifs se produisent entre les temps 1 et 3 (entre le pré-test et le post-test). Cela veut dire que malgré le léger bénéfice observé après avoir travaillé l'oral dans les phases 1 et 2, le passage par une troisième phase (écrite cette fois) a été nécessaire pour obtenir un progrès significatif dans les réponses des élèves en ce qui concerne la structure⁹.

Troisièmement, il est intéressant de noter qu'en dépit du fait que les trois classes expérimentales ont montré des progrès pour plusieurs items, outre l'aspect structure, ces progrès ne s'observent pas nécessairement sur les mêmes items. Les résultats de la classe 1, par exemple, montrent une légère augmentation des moyennes dans la majorité des items, mais les différences significatives ne se produisent que dans trois catégories : le « nombre de mots », le « lien de la réponse avec l'album » et la « structure ». Il nous paraît intéressant de souligner ici que la moyenne de l'item « nombre de mots » évolue significativement entre les temps 1 et 2 (de 9,79 [4,1] dans le pré-test, à un 16,43 [7,94] dans le test intermédiaire). Même si l'augmentation entre les temps 2 et 3 (test intermédiaire et post-test) n'est pas jugée significative, elle ne diminue pas non plus. Cela veut à nouveau dire que l'apprentissage réalisé dans les phases orales a été conservé par les élèves après le transfert à l'écrit. Pour les deux autres items, la réalisation de l'apprentissage a nécessité un transfert à l'écrit pour montrer un progrès significatif.

Dans le cas de la classe 2, il y a aussi une légère augmentation dans la majorité des items, mais il y a quatre variables pour lesquelles s'observe un progrès significatif : « le nombre de mots », « la structure de la réponse », « l'aspect sémantique » et « l'aspect syntaxique ». De nouveau, dans les quatre items, la différence significative s'observe en passant par la phase écrite (entre le temps 1 et 3).

La classe 3, quant à elle, montre un progrès significatif dans la majorité des items (cinq sur huit). Dans presque tous les items s'observe une différence significative entre les temps 1 et 2 et une légère diminution de la moyenne entre le test intermédiaire et le post-test (2 et 3). Cela peut signifier que, pour cette classe, les deux phases orales ont suffi pour permettre aux élèves de progresser dans le développement de leurs compétences. Nous pouvons penser aussi que la phase écrite a été moins bénéfique, dans la mesure où la classe 3 n'évolue pas aussi significativement que les classes 1 et 2 sur d'autres items.

À cet égard, nous émettons l'hypothèse que la variable « enseignant » a eu une incidence sur les résultats. La façon dont chaque enseignant a mis en place chaque phase de l'activité pourrait avoir déterminé, dans une large mesure, les résultats de l'activité. Il conviendrait donc de mettre à l'analyse cette variable sur la base des enregistrements qui ont été effectués, afin d'identifier la façon dont une mise en œuvre particulière du dispositif produit des effets renforcés sur tel ou tel item et conforte la nécessité d'analyser la variable « enseignant » comme instrument de mesure dans la mise en évidence de la qualité d'un dispositif didactique (Bressoux, 2007).

⁹ Il conviendrait donc de vérifier, lors d'une prochaine expérimentation, si c'est la répétition de la tâche qui a permis son amélioration ou si le passage par l'écrit a été déterminant.

Quatrièmement, nous remarquons que les items « nombre d'idées » et « adverbe » ne montrent de progrès significatifs dans aucune des classes. À notre avis, ceci peut être dû à plusieurs facteurs. En ce qui concerne l'item « adverbe », il est important de mentionner que les questions que nous avons posées aux élèves sont des questions assez générales qui ne demandent pas d'explicitier les circonstances de temps, de lieu ou la manière dont se déroule la situation qu'ils ont mentionnée. Les questions demandaient aux élèves de dire simplement quelles sont les choses qu'ils aimaient ou les choses qui les faisaient se sentir bien. Dans ce contexte, les phrases qui ont été travaillées pendant chaque phase de l'activité ne mettent pas nécessairement l'accent sur l'utilisation de cette classe de mots.

En ce qui concerne l'item « nombre d'idées », on observe que leur quantité varie toujours entre 3 et 5, indépendamment de la phase concernée. Ce maintien à une quantité réduite est peut-être dû à l'empan mnésique qui se définit comme la « quantité limitée d'environ 7 (\pm 2) unités d'information pouvant être retenues en mémoire à court terme pour une période restreinte de moins d'une minute » (Bérubé, 1991, p.10). À cet égard, peut-être que, quand les élèves sont confrontés à une question précise, ils ne sont capables d'émettre qu'un certain nombre d'idées. Il faut mentionner que nous n'avons pas posé d'autres questions pour aller plus loin ou pour tenter d'obtenir plus d'idées. Même si les élèves ont donné des réponses plus longues à certains moments, le nombre d'idées a toujours varié entre 3 et 5. L'âge des élèves doit également être pris en considération et il y aurait lieu de vérifier auprès d'un public plus âgé la possible variance de cet item.

Cinquièmement, en observant les deux dernières colonnes de chaque tableau, qui présentent l'évolution globale des aspects évalués, il est possible de constater que l'aspect syntaxique et l'aspect sémantique ont progressé dans toutes les classes expérimentales et de façon significative pour les classes 2 et 3. Par ailleurs, la classe contrôle, en plus de ne montrer aucun progrès, présente une légère diminution des deux moyennes globales. Nos résultats de recherche portent à croire que le fait d'utiliser des albums jeunesse d'une « manière classique » et sans une intention claire ne développerait pas les habiletés orales des élèves.

Mise en contexte des résultats : analyse qualitative

Il nous a semblé utile de nous concentrer sur des exemples recueillis, représentatifs de l'ensemble du groupe, qui permettent de montrer de manière concrète et significative l'impact de l'activité.

Nous avons d'abord choisi de nous centrer sur l'item « **structure de la réponse** », puisque celui-ci a fait l'objet d'un progrès significatif dans les trois classes expérimentales. Le tableau 7 présente, à titre d'exemple, l'évolution des réponses de quatre élèves – un par classe – et donne à voir que le progrès se constate soit après les deux premières phases de l'activité, soit après la mise en place du prolongement sur le savoir écrire.

Tableau 7

Évolution de la réponse en ce qui a trait à la « structure de la réponse »

« Quelles sont les choses que tu aimes faire ? Quelles sont les choses qui te font te sentir bien ? »				
Classe	Élève	Pré-test	Test intermédiaire	Post-test
1	AN ¹⁰	<i>l'école, regarder la télé, la bibliothèque, les chats¹¹ (3)</i>	<i>les alphas, le journal de classe, les oranges, jouer avec ma maman (3)</i>	<i>j'aime bien manger des pommes et regarder des roses (5)</i>
2	MO	<i>faire du vélo, aller à la plage (3)</i>	<i>faire du vélo, aller à la plage (3)</i>	<i>faire du vélo, aller à la plage et nager avec Adam (4)</i>
3	JA	<i>jouer, regarder la télé, manger des frites, de la glace et des popcorns. (3)</i>	<i>jouer avec mon amie Walli, j'aime bien manger des frites et travailler avec madame Morgane. (5)</i>	<i>j'aime bien jouer avec mes amis, soigner la terre, et j'aime bien dessiner. (5)</i>
Classe	Élève	Pré-test	Post-test	
Contrôle	WA	<i>manger des fruits, boire de l'eau, dormir, lire. (3)</i>	<i>manger, manger des pommes. (3)</i>	

Si nous nous concentrons sur WA, l'élève de la classe contrôle, nous pouvons constater qu'il utilise la même structure pour répondre : à chaque fois, il construit une réponse en utilisant une structure verbe + complément. Cette situation est observée pour la majorité des élèves de la classe contrôle : ils ont tendance à maintenir une structure syntaxique basique de leur réponse dans les différents temps de l'expérimentation. Alors que les classes expérimentales produisent des phrases plus complexes, utilisent des conjonctions de coordination pour articuler leurs propositions, étoffent les compléments de verbe ou de phrase.

Une autre variable pertinente est le « **nombre de mots** », qui a, elle aussi, fait l'objet de progrès significatifs dans deux classes (1 et 2). Le tableau 8 présente quelques exemples emblématiques illustrant ces progrès : le nombre de mots utilisés par les élèves dans le post-test est assez supérieur à celui des tests précédents.

Tableau 8

Évolution de la réponse en ce qui a trait au « nombre de mots »

« Quelles sont les choses que tu aimes faire ? Quelles sont les choses qui te font te sentir bien ? »				
Classe	Élève	Pré-test	Test intermédiaire	Post-test
1	AN	<i>l'école, regarder la télé, la bibliothèque, les chats</i>	<i>les alphas, le journal de classe, les oranges, jouer avec maman</i>	<i>j'aime bien manger des pommes et regarder les roses</i>
2	BA	<i>cuisiner, travailler, écrire, travailler avec les enfants</i>	<i>cuisiner avec maman, travailler avec maman et madame</i>	<i>aller à l'école, dormir, conduire mon vélo, cuisiner des gâteaux avec maman, jouer avec mon petit frère</i>

¹⁰ Il s'agit ici des initiales des élèves.

¹¹ Code de la réponse : (0) pas de réponse, (1) verbe, (2) sujet-verbe, (3) verbe-complément, (4) verbe-compléments, (5) sujet-verbe-compléments.

2	AL	<i>travailler, écouter madame, lire avec madame, dire des mots gentils à madame</i>	<i>travailler, jouer avec ma copine, dessiner madame</i>	<i>bien travailler à l'école, jouer avec mes copines, j'aime travailler et aider tout le monde, aller au magasin avec maman, j'aime bien travailler avec maman, j'aime bien travailler toute seule à la maison</i>
2	BAL	<i>me mettre une robe, travailler</i>	<i>travailler, jouer avec BA, compter des voitures rouges</i>	<i>travailler à l'école, jouer à touche-touche, dormir, aller à la cours, aller à la gymnastique</i>

Bien que les élèves de la classe 3 n'aient pas montré de progrès significatifs pour cet item, il est utile de mentionner que le nombre moyen de mots utilisés par ces élèves y était, depuis le premier test, assez important (contrairement à ce que montrent les résultats des deux autres classes expérimentales). Ils ont toujours utilisé entre 17 et 25 mots en moyenne, ce qui a été le maximum pour la classe 1 et 2. Cela peut s'expliquer simplement par le fait que les élèves de la classe 3 ont plus de facilité à s'exprimer avec une personne inconnue que les élèves des deux autres classes ou qu'ils sont plus habitués de s'exprimer à l'oral. Suivant cette hypothèse, les élèves de la classe 3 n'auraient pas bénéficié de l'activité de la même manière pour cet item simplement parce que leur degré de maîtrise en la matière était déjà suffisant considérant leur stade de développement.

Un autre item intéressant est celui du « **lien de la réponse avec l'album** » parce que, tout comme le précédent, il a fait l'objet d'un progrès significatif commun à deux classes. Cependant, à cette occasion, les changements notables se sont manifestés dans les classes 1 et 3. Le tableau 16 montre comment certains élèves ont utilisé de manière claire quelques idées issues des albums travaillés pour construire leurs réponses, surtout après la phase 2. Nous avons mis en gras les idées qui viennent des albums.

Tableau 9

Évolution de la réponse en ce qui concerne le « lien avec l'album »

« Quelles sont les choses que tu aimes faire ? Quelles sont les choses qui te font te sentir bien ? »				
Classe	Élève	Pré-test	Test intermédiaire	Post-test
1	SA	<i>j'aime bien venir à l'école, j'aime bien rester à la maison, regarder des arcs-en-ciel et dormir</i>	<i>dormir, nager dans l'eau, regarder le ciel quand il y a des dessins de nuages, quand on part en vacances</i>	<i>dormir, j'aime bien travailler avec monsieur, j'aime bien aller à la plage</i>
1	YL	<i>je ne sais pas... aller au parc, regarder la télé</i>	<i>aller à la plage, dormir le weekend, regarder les étoiles</i>	<i>aller à la plage</i>
3	LI	<i>faire mes devoirs à la maison</i>	<i>j'aime bien aller au parc avec mon frère pour regarder le soleil quand il se couche j'aime la nuit quand je regarde la lune de mon jardin toute seule</i>	<i>quand je fais mes devoirs à la maison et maman me dit « très bien » quand je termine</i>

À cet égard, il convient de signaler que pour répondre à la question, les élèves ont utilisé principalement des phrases presque identiques à celles issues des albums, situation qui pourrait être due au manque d'idées et au jeune âge des élèves. À partir des exemples du tableau, nous pouvons constater que les élèves n'apportent pas des idées nouvelles, ce qui nous amène à penser que le « progrès » montré par les chiffres ne met pas en évidence un vrai progrès ; il s'agit plutôt d'une reproduction / copie des mêmes idées proposées par les albums. Ceci semble assez logique dans le sens où en fonction de leur jeune âge les élèves ont peu de connaissances littéraires et peu de bagage lexical pour reformuler davantage.

Malgré ce qui précède, les résultats montrent comment la lecture des albums permet aux élèves d'enrichir leur vocabulaire, de se mettre dans diverses situations de communication et de s'identifier à certaines d'entre elles. En ce sens, l'exploitation d'albums, qui offrent des structures syntaxiques diversifiées et présentent une richesse lexicale, semble propice aux apprentissages¹².

Conclusion

Au cours de cette étude, nous avons tenté de connaître l'impact des activités spécifiques sur les habiletés orales, voire même scripturales des élèves en partant du principe qu'actuellement, l'enseignement de l'oral à l'école pose plusieurs difficultés et est souvent relégué au second plan : les enseignants sont conscients de l'importance de travailler l'oral, mais disent ne pas avoir les outils et la formation didactique nécessaires pour pouvoir le faire.

Nous pensons avoir montré, via l'analyse du dispositif proposé, qu'enseigner l'oral par des activités spécifiques a des effets positifs sur les habiletés langagières, tant orales qu'écrites, des élèves. Bien que nous ayons remarqué que chaque élève réagit différemment aux activités, globalement les progrès sont clairs.

Tout d'abord, mentionnons que cette expérimentation dans les classes nous a permis de constater que ni les enseignants ni les élèves ne sont habitués à travailler l'oral via des dispositifs dédiés et variés. Néanmoins, le travail de l'oral semble porter rapidement des résultats, tant à l'oral qu'à l'écrit. À cet égard, le fait que l'oral fasse partie des curriculums et y apparaisse comme un objet d'enseignement au même titre que l'écrit se confirme. Dans ce sens, il convient que les quatre compétences (lire, écrire, parler et écouter) proposées par les Socles (Communauté Française, 2013) en Belgique soient travaillées en leur accordant la même importance dans le développement du langage, tant dans les prescrits que dans les pratiques.

Ensuite, un autre aspect à signaler est la force qu'ont les sources écrites pour travailler l'oral. En effet, comme le mentionnent notamment Dolz et Gagnon (2008), le travail sur les sources écrites, par exemple les albums jeunesse, permet de structurer l'enseignement de l'oral. D'après l'expérimentation et l'analyse que nous avons faites, nous pouvons confirmer que le lien entre l'oral et l'écrit est plus fort que ce que nous avions pensé. Le dispositif qui a été mis en œuvre à cette occasion a permis de mettre en évidence que les albums jeunesse, qui appartiennent à l'écrit, fonctionnent comme un levier pour travailler l'oral, permettant aux élèves de mobiliser les idées

¹² Il est cependant intéressant de souligner ici que malgré la lecture des albums, aucune réponse de la classe contrôle ne montre un lien avec l'album. Ce qui laisse croire que le fait de lire des albums aux élèves de manière « classique » ne permettrait pas nécessairement aux élèves de se mettre en situation et de s'appropriier du vocabulaire. Ce point mériterait d'être investigué davantage.

issues des textes, de travailler sur la structure des phrases et réinvestir ensuite ces apprentissages dans l'écrit. Cela nous amène à penser que l'utilisation de genres écrits offre la possibilité de diversifier les activités qui, d'habitude, se réalisent pour travailler l'oral. De plus, le passage par l'écrit pour développer l'oral s'est révélé intéressant. En effet, si dans certains cas la phase orale a suffi pour produire un impact positif sur les réponses des élèves, dans d'autres cas, il a fallu un passage par la phase écrite pour obtenir des effets significatifs. Par ailleurs, même si les progrès se produisent à la suite de la phase orale, les résultats demeurent plus ou moins les mêmes après le passage par la phase écrite, ce qui indique qu'il y a une stabilisation des acquis. Il semble donc qu'oral et écrit se servent et se renforcent mutuellement quand ils sont associés dans une visée commune d'apprentissage.

Par ailleurs, si le dispositif semble montrer des résultats encourageants, il faut admettre que les limites de la recherche ne permettent pas de confirmer toutes nos hypothèses. A titre d'exemple, l'efficacité limitée des apprentissages réalisés dans le groupe contrôle tient-elle de la singularité d'une expérimentation (un seul enseignant, une seule classe, un seul terrain) ou relève-t-elle de pratiques plus généralisées ? Il faudrait enquêter sur les pratiques effectives des enseignants en la matière pour établir un état des lieux de l'existant et en mesurer la pertinence. De la même manière, l'analyse du dispositif repose sur un nombre restreint d'élèves appartenant à trois classes qui présentent des résultats et des sauts qualitatifs qui se déclinent différemment selon les groupes. Ceci tend à conforter que le facteur enseignant est fondamental et devrait être interrogé plus avant. Surtout, il s'agit de mesurer l'efficacité du dispositif en lien avec la façon dont il est mené effectivement dans les classes afin d'identifier quels invariants déterminent le gain en termes d'apprentissage. En somme, comment les enseignants s'emparent-ils du dispositif ?

En outre, le déplacement des progrès significatifs, qui se produit pour les classes 1 et 2 entre le temps 1 et le temps 3 (alors qu'il a lieu entre les temps 1 et 2 dans la classe 3) ne permet pas de déterminer avec force si c'est la répétition de la tâche ou le passage par l'écrit qui constitue le levier de progression. Il demeure que nous pensons avoir trouvé là un objet intéressant pour des recherches futures.

Finalement, au-delà du dispositif ponctuel que nous avons présenté ici, et au regard d'autres résultats positifs que nous avons obtenus par ailleurs dans le cadre d'autres expérimentations, il nous semble que l'utilisation continue et réfléchie d'activités visant à travailler spécifiquement l'oral à l'école développe les compétences orales, certainement, mais également les compétences écrites des élèves. Loin d'être assujéti à celui de l'écrit, l'enseignement de l'oral relève, dès le début de la scolarité obligatoire, d'une nécessité impérieuse. Plus sûrement, c'est l'intégration des compétences orales et écrites qui doivent servir la solidité des apprentissages langagiers.

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Teaching Multimodal Literacy Through Reading and Writing Graphic Novels

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Abstract

Scholarship suggests that writing teachers and instructors looking to integrate multimodal composition into their secondary or post-secondary classrooms should consider graphic novels as a mentor text for multimodal literacy. To help those pedagogues unfamiliar with graphic novels, we offer three titles—*The Photographer*, *Operation Ajax*, and *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow*—students have responded positively to. Herein we offer a summary for each text, a discussion of their uses to teach multimodal literacy, a range of multimodal assignments to pair with each text, and a variety of assessment methods.

Introduction

The last two decades have seen a surge in scholarship supporting the use of graphic novels in the English classroom (for example, see Bakis, 2012; Cary, 2004; Frey & Fisher, 2008; Miller, 2015; and Syma & Weiner, 2013). The scope of how graphic novels are discussed is impressive. For instance, there are literary scholars examining how complex literary themes, sophisticated metaphors, dynamic characterization, and commentary on social, cultural, and historical issues can be found in a wide array of graphic novels (e.g., Chute, 2008; Meskin, 2009). Additionally, there are pedagogues who suggest graphic narratives are an excellent gateway literacy—that is, an avenue for reluctant readers to engage with reading (Jobe & Sakari, 1999; Weiner, 2010). More recently, compositionists and rhetoricians have become increasingly interested in the multimodality of comics; most comics, particularly mainstream comics, consistently make use of images juxtaposed with text (usually in the form of speech balloons, captions, or sound effects). Jacobs (2014) argues that print comics are sites of complex multimodality at work, as comics are “comprised not only of linguistic elements, but also some combination of visual audio (as represented visually), gestural, and spatial elements” (para. 4). He goes on to note readers of comics are simultaneously making meaning from a variety of elements, ranging from words to layout to panel composition to body language.

As such, and for a variety of reasons, educators are often looking for recommendations of graphic novel titles to integrate into their respective classrooms. We, for example, use graphic novels at the post-secondary level in numerous ways and are constantly on the lookout for useful comics and graphic novels (both as teachers and as readers). As a teacher educator Mike uses comics with pre-service English language arts (ELA) teachers in an effort to help them plan and implement their own literacy instruction, specifically toward fostering multimodal analysis and composition. Jeff, a comic and digital rhetoric scholar, teaches entire courses on comics and utilizes comics and graphic novels to help students explore and develop multimodal and digital literacy skills. While many educators are well versed in the scholarship, others incorporate comics

and graphic novels because they and/or their students enjoy and find value in them. Additionally, interest in comics in the classroom continues to increase as a result of word of mouth and the popularity of comics. Regardless of the reason, many educators find benefit in title suggestions. Thankfully, there are several stalwart annotated bibliographies focused on graphic novels appropriate for classroom adaptation. For instance, since 2007 ALA has published a detailed list of graphic novels appropriate for teenagers, offering titles in multiple genres. Similarly, Diamond Comics—the North American distributor of comic books—has published a magazine entitled *The Diamond Bookshelf* that regularly features and recommends a diverse range of graphic novels for educators; additionally, they offer a host of recommendations on their website and even offer a monthly newsletter intended to keep educators abreast of news in graphic novels. And, though more quickly obsolete, there are a range of books offering detailed title recommendations for librarians and educators of graphic novels appropriate for different ages and settings (see Goldsmith, 2010; Gravett, 2005, among others). All of these publications celebrate the diversity of graphic novels and work hard to address titles appropriate for multiple audiences and ages.

Though useful, many of these recommendation lists focus on graphic novels as literature; that is, these publications tend to be more interested in content, theme, characterization, and so forth as opposed to form. While this is indeed helpful—and understanding graphic novels as literature is valuable for educators and scholars alike—it leaves out recommendations for instructors interested in utilizing graphic novels as multimodal sponsors. While the number of texts for teachers continues to rise (e.g., Bakis, 2012; Carter, 2007; Monnin, 2010; Tabachnick, 2009), they are comparatively fewer than those dedicated to discussing content and comics as a form (e.g., Cohn, 2013; McCloud, 1994; Groensteen, 2007; Postema, 2013; Sousanis, 2015). Given the inherent multimodality of comics, there may be an unstated assumption that any graphic novel is appropriate for teaching multimodality. However, in our experience, there are certain graphic novels that work especially well for composition classrooms striving to introduce multimodality to secondary or post-secondary writing students. As such, this article offers three graphic novels—*The Photographer: Into War-Torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders* (Guibert, 2009), *Operation AJAX* (Burwen & de Seve, 2013), and *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow* (Fies, 2012)—that are appropriate for writing teachers and instructors at both the secondary and post-secondary level. These three texts utilize multimodality in engaging, unique, challenging, and ultimately rewarding ways, as they prepare students to not only write graphic texts, but also other multimodal compositions such as photo-essays, multimedia presentations, and scrapbooks. In other words, these comics (as well as comics as a medium) hold much utility as mentor texts, where students develop the (transferable) skills and language to read, analyze, and discuss authors' rhetorical and modal choices prior to using those experiences to drive their own multimodal compositions, whether those be comics or a multitude of other text types. For us, using comics as mentor texts offers far more than simply fostering comic composition skills. Those skills gained from studying comics as multimodal texts offer students transferrable skills for composing an array of multimodal texts. Our discussion (1) summarizes each text, (2) notes why it is a practical mentor text for multimodal literacy sponsorship, and (3) offers suggestions for multimodal composition assignments that pair well with and draw from the titles we recommend. We pay detailed attention to these comics as mentor texts, as the learning that occurs as a result is vital to critical thinking, problem solving, and the composing process. Following this, we offer suggestions for assessing multimodal compositions, a vital component of any composition instruction.

Literature Review

Scholars and pedagogues are increasingly recognizing that multimodal literacy is an issue that should be addressed in writing classrooms; part of this urgency stems from the oft-cited National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) position on 21st century literacies. Here, NCTE (2011) argues that proficient 21st century readers and writers should be able to “create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multi-media text” (para. 1). As such, writing instructors at both the secondary and post-secondary levels are beginning to integrate explicit multimodal writing instruction in their curriculum. For instance, Frost, Myatt, and Smith (2009) find value in assigning hybrid essays (images used in alphabetic essays) because they recognize that on a daily basis, students utilize myriad “semiotic resources” in their private and public communications; the authors also find that the hybrid essay helps individuals move past privileging the printed/written word while simultaneously helping students learn a variety of communicative modes. Other pedagogues have advocated using websites (e.g. Kirchoff & Cook, 2016 and Rankins-Robertson, Bouelle, Bouelle, & Fisher, 2014), podcasts (e.g. Jones, 2010 and Smythe & Neufeld, 2010), blogs (e.g. Doering, Beach, & O’Brien, 2007 and Clark, 2010), videos (e.g. Lovett et al., 2010 and Spires et al., 2010), and games (e.g. Colby & Colby, 2008 and Robison, 2008). More detailed overviews of integrating multimodal composition projects in writing courses can be found in edited collections devoted to that very subject, such as *Multimodal Composition* (2007), *Reading and Writing New Media* (2010), and *Teaching the New Writing* (2009).

One such way to incorporate multimodality in classrooms is through the use of comics and graphic novels. Indeed, a number of scholars have argued for the inclusion of graphic novels in ELA and college literacy instruction for the myriad benefits that accompany them (Bakis, 2012; Carter, 2007; Connors, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2011; Hall, 2011; Smetana, 2010). Smetana (2010) notes the format of graphic novels (i.e., the weaving together of images and text) can help readers focus on vital information to make meaning from the text. Not only do graphic novels assist students in developing deeper understandings of and appreciations for literature and literary elements (Moeller, 2011; Schwarz, 2002), but they can also promote the development of transferable literacy skills that can be applied to other text types (Jacobs, 2007; Frey & Fisher, 2008). This is, in part, because graphic novels require readers to make meaning from a variety of types and modes of information, such as text, image, color, paneling, and so forth (Carrier, 2000; Takayhoshi & Selfe, 2007). The ability to analyze and utilize a variety of modes of communication allows students to develop a more nuanced and layered understanding of the rhetorical situation, including a variety of ways to effectively communicate with an audience. As such, the skills gained from consuming and analyzing graphic novels (as mentor texts) are applicable to monomodal (e.g., traditional writing) and other multimodal composition types alike. Moreover, graphic novels have been found to influence students’ perception of writing and of the impact of multimodal composition on their writing abilities. Kirchoff & Cook (2016), for example, found that not only did students believe that multimodal composition positively influenced their writing, but they also demonstrated a better understanding of the roles audience and design played in their own composition processes. That said, Wysocki (2003) offers a reminder that teachers must assist students in understanding the ways in which meaning is created based on authorial choices in visual design and arrangement. In other words, explicit instruction and modeling are vital.

Several scholars (e.g., Fisher & Frey, 2014; Hammond, 2009; Jacobs, 2007; Schwarz, 2002) discuss comics and graphic novels as sophisticated sites and sponsors of multiple literacies, requiring readers to create meaning from a variety of modalities and from the intersection of those modes. Interacting with this complexity and sophistication, as Versaci (2001) argues, requires

readers to be active participants. Furthermore, graphic novels, as Serafini (2014) states, can foster development of a metalanguage for discussing and analyzing multiple modes of communication. Others (e.g., Connors, 2012; Pantaleo, 2014) argue that graphic novels can promote more complex thinking about and understandings of text and the visual as modes of communication. This development of both text and visual analysis, including the meaning created between the two, are vital components of multimodal literacy. In other words, to conduct multimodal analysis, students must engage in and develop the skills for textual analysis and visual analysis, both of which can be fostered through graphic novels.

Graphic novels have also been discussed as effective sponsors of students' multimodal composition. Wierszewski (2014) argues creating comics can (1) help students to understand the conventions of multimodal texts are unique and contextually tied, and (2) empower students to be creative and to employ agency in their literacy practices. Kennedy, Thomsen, and Trabold (2015) share, "comics provide a rich avenue for students to deliberate with more sophistication the rhetorical moves they employ in their own writing" (p. 192). Connors (2012) finds students were able to develop and use both linguistic and visual design to actively analyze graphic novels, skills that can then be applied to their own compositions. Similarly, additional research (Pantaleo, 2014) suggests graphic novels can foster higher order thinking. For these literacy benefits to be applied to multimodal composing, however, it is important to provide students opportunities to read comics "critically with an understanding of how their design conventions contribute to their meaning and persuasiveness" (Wierszewski, 2014, para. 36). Implementing graphic novels in the classroom, for both consumption and composition, can foster multimodal literacy and help bridge the divide that often exists between the literacy practices students use in school and those they engage in outside of schools (i.e., those that make up our 21st century world). It is here, in this need to reconceive ELA and literacy instruction (including the texts and composition methods in which we ask students to engage) that we ground our use of graphic novels to promote and foster multimodal literacy in students.

Graphic Novels and Multimodal Composition

The Photographer: Into War-Torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders

The Photographer: Into War-Torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders is a powerful collaboration between graphic novelist Emmanuel Guibert and photographer Didier Lefèvre. As the title suggests, this work shares the story of Lefèvre's experience during a 1986 Doctors Without Borders mission in North Afghanistan. Traveling with a small group of doctors and nurses, Lefèvre and friends find themselves roving the very land where a war between the Soviet Union and the Afghan Mujahideen is taking place. The story is an interesting combination of autobiography, documentation of the work Doctors Without Borders conducts, examination of war and the far-reaching impact that wars have, and a profile of Afghanistan during the mid-1980s. This text is more than a portrait of one individual—it is a collage of humanity. The tone ranges from sweet to sorrowful to noble—and just about everything in between. Arranged in three books, the first two focus on Lefèvre's time with Doctors Without Borders, while the third details Lefèvre's decision to leave the mission early and traverse North Afghanistan by himself.

Rationale of The Photographer as mentor text. *The Photographer* is a worthy multimodal mentor text for teachers considering the integration of multimodal composition projects in their

classes. The graphic novel is unique in that roughly half of the story is told through actual photos Lefèvre took during his experience with Doctors Without Borders; Guibert's artwork, dialogue, and captions fill in the gaps, often serving as a voice for Lefèvre's recollections. Guibert purposefully uses the *ligne claire* (clear line) style made popular by Herge's *Tintin*. Deceptively simple, Guibert's illustrations aim to take a back seat to Lefèvre's photos, which allows the photographs to be the principal force behind the narrative. This in itself allows students the possibility for some rich multimodal analysis: how do the photographs and the illustrations work together? How do the photographs and illustrations create a different point of view/tone, and how does this impact the reader? How does the transition from photograph to illustration occur, and how do they influence your reading? What might be done to improve the transitions? These are worthwhile questions to pose to students as burgeoning multimodal composers themselves, as it forces them to consider how to move between different modes and styles of communication.

Given the narrative power of the photographs, students can focus much of their visual analysis on the photos themselves, which is an excellent way for students new to multimodal composition to focus their attention and develop the skills requisite for analyzing mentor images and subsequently composing their own. As students are no doubt familiar with the medium of photography—that is, while they may not necessarily be adept at analyzing photographs, students are generally comfortable taking pictures—this gives students a level of familiarity with the text-type they are being asked to analyze. Interestingly, all the photographs are in black and white, so while color is not necessarily a point of analysis for students, use of light, perspective, angle, focus, and shot-choice are possible ways to focus discussion and should be part of the conversation during student analysis.

What makes this text even more interesting—and engaging for teaching multimodal composition—is that several of Lefèvre's images are marked with a red "x." These photographs are images Lefèvre himself was particularly pleased with and ones he thought suitable for publication for promoting Doctors Without Borders. This helps teach multimodal composition in two very key ways. First, students can engage in a discussion about why those images were chosen, which usually leads to some intense visual analysis; we encourage our students to consider and subsequently rationalize whether other images would have been stronger selections for publication. Perhaps more meaningfully, though, is Lefèvre's markings are evidence to students that certain choices have to be made regarding which images to include in a publication; put differently, Lefèvre did not simply use every image he took, but rather he had to make difficult choices regarding which pictures were the most appropriate for his purpose, context, and audience. Thus, it reinforces the idea that students should be making, taking, or finding multiple images and closely analyzing their creations to determine the best shots for their rhetorical purpose, context, and audience. We highlight this when it comes time to the creation of their multimodal compositions; that is, we use *The Photographer* to help show students the composition of these projects is a process—often a time-consuming one—and students will ultimately undergo several revisions, often taking/finding more images than they need in an effort to create the most rhetorically effective document.

Assignment: the photo essay. One multimodal composition assignment that pairs well with *The Photographer* is the photo-essay. Reilly and Goen (2015) observe that the photo-essay is an excellent way to teach students how visuals can work together to create meaning, and through this essay, students are forced to thoughtfully consider the sequencing of images in order to provide their audience the most effective reading experience. Additionally, the authors

appreciate that photo-essays encourage students to think about the organization of images, the diversity of images, and the clarity of their images; they find these skills are easily visualized in a photo-essay, but are valuable skills to translate to more traditional essays as well. Frey (2003) adds that photo-essays asking students to pair image with text often help students choose their (select) words more carefully in order to best “enhance” the photographs they’ve decided to use. These pedagogues, then, are primarily interested in how the photo-essay impacts traditional alphabetic text.

While we value the ways photo-essays can help students develop skills that can improve their traditional essay writing, we want to note photo-essays also help students improve multimodal and visual literacy skills. Photographs are, it could be argued, a multimodal text in and of themselves—regardless of whether the written word is present. This is an extension of Kress’s (2010) belief that all texts are multimodal *in design*, as multimodality simply refers to the use of different modes of communication; thus, while “image” (broadly conceived) is a mode of communication, so too is color, gesture, facial expression, movement, layout, and so forth. As photographs *capture* all of these “modes,” photographs themselves become a rich site of multimodality. Thus, asking students to write a photo-essay is really a layered exercise in multimodality: first, students need to analyze the multiple modes present in one photograph to choose the most rhetorically effective one. These skills are useful to not only multimodal analysis, but also visual analysis. Then, students are asked to use a different mode (text) to enhance their photograph; specifically, the text can be used to reflect, analyze, or discuss what is seen in the photograph.

Our photo essay asks students to advocate for a certain program, policy, or event; we choose this broad theme because, as we discuss with students, one goal of *The Photographer* is to *advocate* for the work that Doctors Without Borders conducts. Thus, this theme helps better parallel what we have read and discussed in class. Students are instructed to find or take ten to twelve photos and write a 50-75 word caption for each photo that clarifies, extends, or explains the image. We stress that like Lefèvre, they will need to take or find more images than they plan on using; the goal is not to use the first ten images they find, but rather the ten best images suited to their specific rhetorical situation.

We first spend some in-class time going over considerations for taking photos. For college classrooms, we suggest using an article such as Harrison’s (2003) “Understanding How Still Images Make Meaning” while for high school classrooms (and even the college classroom), we have found Serafini’s (n.d.) “Photography Analysis Guide” to be eminently useful. These texts not only give students language to analyze photos—obviously an important part of this unit—but they also help students consider what is needed to take a rhetorically impactful photograph. Here, we are trying to get students out of a “point and shoot” mentality and into a frame of mind that encourages careful planning. Through their reading of *The Photographer*, students use and further develop these new skills as they analyze Lefèvre’s photographs.

However, while we ultimately want students to be active creators of content by focusing on taking many of their own photographs, we also acknowledge the value in supplanting their work with existing images they have found through careful research. To that end, we think it is imperative to have conversations regarding copyright and fair use. A lot of students think it is acceptable to peruse Google Images, find photos appropriate for their project, and cite them as they would another source. Most students are not aware that many photos are protected by copyright laws and oftentimes are not subject to fair use laws. Thus, we show students how to conduct fair use searches using Google Images and Creative Commons, as well as showing them

sources such as WikiMedia Commons and PhotoBucket. We still have conversations about how to cite these works, as citing their research is important, but this dialogue should be supplanted by discussions surrounding copyright, fair use, and intellectual theft.

In sum, we have found the photo-essay to be an assignment that helps foster visual and multimodal literacy; given students' familiarity with photographs, they tend to be more comfortable closely analyzing this text-type. Moreover, we appreciate the ease with which this text demonstrates the need for multimodal composition projects to undergo revision; oftentimes, due to the time-consuming nature of multimodal text creation, students feel they only have time to produce one draft. However, by showing them the number of photos Lefèvre takes—and comparatively, how few were used by Doctors Without Borders—we can better articulate the need for students to revise their work as they begin to fine-tune their understanding of audience, purpose, and context.

Operation Ajax

Introduced as an iPad application in 2010, Burwen and De Seve's (2011) *Operation Ajax: How the CIA Toppled Democracy in Iran* is a digital comic designed to provide readers with an interactive multimodal experience. The text is based on a 2007 investigative journalism report of U.S. involvement in the 1953 overthrowing of Iranian democracy to reinstate a monarchy, and the connections to the oil industry. As a result, the story has use as both a narrative and an interpretation of a historical happening. What also makes the text unique is in the way it bridges the traditional comic format with audio, motion, and archived primary documents. For example, *Operation Ajax* borrows heavily from video game design (e.g., using music to create mood and tension throughout the story) to create an immersive experience for readers. This creates an experience akin to playing a game or to film, but because it is a graphic novel at heart, readers have the opportunity to linger with specific panels or images. Additionally, readers can access dossiers to learn more about characters and historical connections. These non-traditional affordances can be used to engage students in active and dynamic textual and narrative analysis.

Rationale of Operation Ajax as mentor text. As Serafini (2014) points out, we must find ways to engage students with and to foster communication using a variety of modalities. While many pedagogues have used print graphic novels to accomplish this—and we advocate this as well—digital graphic novels are also a possibility. Digital graphic novels create a unique opportunity for readers to experience not only text and image, but also movement, sound, and interactivity.

Through *Operation Ajax*, students can develop the skills necessary to make meaning from and across layered modal experiences (Hassett & Schieble, 2007). Using digital comics, and *Operation Ajax* specifically, offers a number of literacy benefits to readers. For example, as Goodbrey (2013) argues, *Operation Ajax* uses animation as a scaffold for reading and understanding movement. Likewise, it establishes pacing for readers, which may assist those less familiar with the comic format or with multimodal texts in general. Because students can linger with individual images and scenes and make their own choices about the speed at which to proceed, the process can be an individual experience for each reader. It is true that graphic novels in general allow readers to linger and thus provides them choice in pacing, but *Operation Ajax* scaffolds pacing in additional and important ways. For example, readers can focus on one scene (or panel) at a time before even seeing subsequent narrative information. In traditional graphic novels, readers can take in the page as a whole before and between focusing on individual panels.

Operation Ajax, because it is structured more like a game or film, focuses readers on one instance at a time and allows them the time necessary to fully interact with and make meaning from the scene before progressing to new information. This additional pacing can help scaffold those new to the format and focus those more experienced.

Aside from the benefits of receiving information from multiple modes, *Operation Ajax* allows students to move from narrative to documentation and background/contextual information in their own ways and in their own time. Additionally, this scaffolding puts readers in control by requiring them to be active participants. Yet another benefit of this digital text is that it includes supplemental documents, in the form of character dossiers and digitally-created primary documents. This is an important resource for all readers, but it can guide those unfamiliar with the historical background and participants. Unlike many other forms of texts, *Operation Ajax* has built in contextual information for supporting and bridging existing gaps in background knowledge or schema. These concepts impact engagement and reading comprehension. Furthermore, the inclusion of the dossiers supports students' information literacy. Ultimately, the format of the text itself benefits readers by creating opportunities to derive meaning from image, text, movement, audio, and the layered combinations of those modes (see, for example, Dittmar, 2012; Goobrey, 2013). We find it useful to ask students to consider how the audio shaped their interpretation of the text. To that end, students could be asked to read the text once with the sound, and once without the sound, to see how their perception of the story shifts.

Digital comics such as *Operation Ajax* also often incorporate interdependence of modalities and media to enhance the narrative and reading experience. Here, students are afforded the opportunity, as Dittmar (2012) discusses, to make choices that impact the narrative structure and ultimately the way in which students read and create meaning from the text. In other words, supporting students' active interaction with the narrative aligns with Kirchoff's (2013) argument that digital comics offer an immersive environment to foster an active relationship with texts.

Assignment: multimedia presentation. After reading *Operation Ajax*, students can create multimedia texts or presentations to apply the skills and understanding learned from reading the digital text. Such an assignment would allow students to create meaning by not only weaving together multiple modes of communication, but also by utilizing the interdependence (or intersection) of those modes. Likewise, it provides the opportunity to use technology to compose a dynamic, interactive text in which student composers must consider the unique rhetorical situation and how to both provide the reader with guidance and the freedom to make choices that impact their experience.

When we include this assignment in our classes, we task students with developing their own digital narrative. This can take multiple forms. For example, students could compose an interactive narrative in which readers can choose a path, which allows students to transfer the skills they develop while reading *Operation Ajax* to their compositions. We have found Twinery.org (a free, hypertext-generator) works really well for this; it does take some rudimentary knowledge of coding, but Twinery.org offers an array of helpful videos and wikis to help the novice. Students could also create a narrative that incorporates sound, movement, and images if they prefer. While this could be accomplished using any narrative, we generally allow students to pair the stories with historical situations and artifacts, in much the same fashion they experienced in *Operation Ajax*. There is no shortage of technology tools to pair with this assignment. In our experiences, we have found Microsoft Power Point and Prezi to work well, as most students have previous experience with one or both of them, which allows focus and time to be placed on the composition process

rather than on learning to engage with a new tool. While there are myriad ways teachers can frame this assignment, one prompt we have used in the past reads as follows:

Now that you have read *Operation Ajax*, you are being asked to apply what you learned from your reading and from our discussions to compose your own digital narrative. Specifically, you should give thought to the modes you choose, including the affordances of each and the ways in which they may work interdependently to create meaning for your audience. Likewise, consider how you might make your composition interactive and engaging while establishing a structured narrative.

For teachers interested in providing additional scaffolding and discussion, this can be assigned as a collaborative project, where students work in pairs or small groups. This collaborative approach to multimedia composing includes several benefits, such as requiring students to communicate, to articulate their idea, and to agree or compromise on approaches (Barton, 2005).

Before moving on, it is important to also provide teachers with additional recommendations to maximize the benefits students experience composing digital narratives. We cannot overstate how important it is to provide ample class time not only for reading and discussing *Operation Ajax*, but also for scaffolding the composing process. Class time should be used to model the stages of the composing process for students, to analyze and discuss other mentor texts, to provide and receive feedback on in-process work, and to fully utilize the process. Additionally, it is important to design opportunities for in-class discussions of modes and media, including the affordances and constraints that accompany each. Because this is most likely a new composition type for many students, it is necessary to provide multiple levels of support. That said, we find it important to encourage students to experiment with new approaches, tools, modes, and so forth. This creates situations in which students can, as Glassman and Kang (2011) discuss, engage in and further develop the skill of meaningful problem solving.

Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow?

At its heart, Brian Fies's *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow?* is a father-son story set against the back-drop of the technological innovation taking place from the 1930s (New York's World Fair in 1939) to the 1970s (the final Apollo space mission in 1975). The principal protagonist is Buddy, and his father is aptly named "Pop." Readers might be confused that characters don't age as one would expect—Buddy is a child in 1939, but is still only a teen in 1965 when he and Pop visit Cape Canaveral. In fact, by the end of the story, Buddy is just getting ready for college. Some might argue the age of these characters matter little, though, as Fies is more concerned with telling a scientific history (technological innovation) through historic photos and newspaper clippings and cultural history (primarily comics history) through the interspersing of the fictitious *Space Age Comics*. However, it is worth noting that by not aging these characters traditionally, Fies is striving to emphasize that we become young, awestruck observers when we witness major scientific breakthroughs and innovations. There's a touch of sentimentalism pervading this graphic novel, as Fies is consciously trying to draw on reader nostalgia. As such, instructors should be ready to provide some background information on both the technological innovation taking place between 1939 and 1975, as well as some rudimentary comic book history (we've found History Channel's *Superheroes Unmasked* is appropriate to supplement readers' background knowledge).

Rationale of Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow? as mentor text. Thus far, we have noted how two graphic novels—*The Photographer* and *Operation Ajax*—move beyond the “traditional” multimodality found in comics (e.g. the interplay of image and text). For instance, in *The Photographer*, Guibert primarily tells Lefèvre’s story through photographs, only supplying the more traditional cartoon illustrations to fill in the gaps. Thus, the story is constructed through the multimodality found in the black and white photographs—gesture, facial expression, and perspective, for instance. Conversely, we noted that *Operation Ajax* adds the unique dimension of motion (dynamism) in an effort to influence and/or guide the reader’s pacing. *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow* continues our discussion of how graphic novels can simultaneously enrich and complicate traditional notions of multimodality in efforts to have the *form* inform the *content*. Fies accomplishes this in three distinct, but equally important, ways.

First, Fies primarily tells his story through traditional paneled compilations of word (caption and dialogue balloons) and image; however, Fies also adds a scrapbook quality to his story by also including modified photographs, four old *Space Age Adventures* comics (the fictitious titles created specifically for this graphic novel), and portions of newspaper articles. These elements serve to reinforce that though a fictionalized story, this is being told from the perspective of the narrator as a faux autobiography; we as readers are getting a glimpse into his past, and the additional artifacts give us a more complete image of what the narrator found important at different points in his life. Moreover, these “artifacts” contribute to one of the overarching themes of the text—“Sometimes the old stuff is worth keeping around” (Fies, 2009, p. 177). Here, then, the old photographs, comics, and newspaper articles from a bygone era serve as the “old stuff” that the narrator seemingly scrapbooked.

The four *Space Age Adventure* comics, part of the pastiche that makes up the scrapbook, offer students a tremendous opportunity for visual, and indeed, multimodal analysis. Each comic is meant to be representative of the different “ages” (e.g. gold, silver, bronze) of comics. As such, Fies changes his drawing styles and page layouts to reflect the comics of the time these pieces were supposedly published. For example, the early “gold” age *Space Age Adventure* comic uses halftone and Ben-Day dot patterns—a style that one familiar with comics can easily link to the early comics of the 20th century. This change in art allows students to discuss how *style* can be a powerful connotation tool—how something is colored and arranged on a page matters.

Fies, though, goes a step further in an effort to create the illusion of well-read, old comics. Many of the comics have ink splatters and smears, oil stains close to the spine—presumably caused by staples that were lubricated a bit too much—and faded colors. Moreover, Fies purposefully includes errors—typographical and otherwise—in his earlier stories because, “to Fies, the ‘cheapness’ of 1930s comic books includes a hasty printing, during which a lot of errors occurred” (Bartosch, 2016, p. 245). In addition to adding these elements, Fies also changes the haptic experience for the reader, as the four fictitious comics are printed on different paper stock. Fies specifically sought paper-stock that was cheap, or, as he puts it, “bad” (Bartosch, 2016, p. 246). Though Fies drew these comics on old newspaper stock, he knew that it would still look pristine on a glossy page. Thus, he negotiated with his publisher to use paper-stock that would get as close to the pulps of the early comics as possible (Bartosch, 2016, p. 246). The result is a wide range of tactile experiences for the readers, as the graphic novel is not printed on only one paper-stock—a rarity for graphic novels, and indeed, any book. The unique haptic interaction, then, opens up conversations of materiality—and its impact on the tactile senses—for students. This is an important part of multimodality that is oft under-discussed (see Alexander, 2013; Stein, 2008; and Norris, 2004). *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow?* facilitates these important

discussions. Additionally, we emphasize to students that even the selection of material can help reinforce an author's purpose or speak to an audience more directly.

Assignment: the scrapbook. The scrapbook writing assignment is often associated with history classes (see Adkison, Woodworth-Neyand, & Hatzenbuehler, 2001; Schur, 2007; and Good, 2013, among others) but it has recently found a home in composition classrooms promoting multimodal composition as well (see Goodburn & Camp, 2004; Mahon, 2011; and Alexander, 2013, among others). Scrapbooks synthesize a number of artifacts to create a cohesive text; for instance, newspaper clippings, old photographs, material objects, and natural objects (e.g. pressed flower petals) could all realistically be found in a scrapbook. While scrapbooks are obviously multimodal in that they integrate some combination of image and text, it is also multimodal in that readers interpret scrapbooks not only through sight, but also through touch and (perhaps) smell. Alexander (2013) finds the haptic element of scrapbooks to be immensely appealing, noting students begin to think about materiality in rhetorical terms—that is, how an object feels can contribute to an argument a rhetor is trying to convey. She goes on to note how materiality also impacts the design of a text; a scrapbook, for instance, is limited to the artifacts available to a student and the student must figure out how to best arrange, modify, and ultimately present these various artifacts into a cogent, readable text. In essence, scrapbooks allow for the form to become part of the content. Alexander suggests this knowledge and understanding of how form influences content “can benefit students in their rhetorical awareness, critical thinking, literacy skills, and transfer of writing concepts from one domain to another” (para. 4).

Though Brian Fies's *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow?* is not really a scrapbook, it is (in part) presented as one, as at times Fies interweaves newspaper clippings, old photographs, and old comic books throughout his narrative; he even takes it a step further by using different paper-stocks for different portions of his text. Our assignment asks students to take the idea begun in Fies's *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow?* and build upon it by encouraging composers to focus on the material aspect of multimodality. When we've taught this assignment, we've asked our students to create literacy scrapbooks; it is important to note, though, that the theme of the assignment—the content of the scrapbook—should be tailored to the specific classroom context. Regardless, we've included a brief description of a prompt we've used in the past:

Your task is to create a literacy scrapbook. This scrapbook should contain mementos and artifacts that tell the story of how you perceive writing and reading. Consider the following as you reflect on your literacy history: what is an early memory about writing or reading? Why is this event significant? Who taught you to read or write, and how/why were they successful? What book/text had a positive/negative impact on your reading/writing life? Why? These questions are meant to guide you to thinking about what artifacts to include in your scrapbook.

The scrapbook assignment links well with Brian Fies's graphic novel, as Fies utilizes a lot of the principles found in scrapbooking in the assemblage of his unique graphic narrative. After discussing the rhetorical choices regarding artifact collection and presentation in *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow?* it makes sense to ask students to create their own scrapbooks. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, this project helps students develop their multimodal literacy skills. They need to consider which artifacts to include and how those artifacts

help their overall literacy narrative. As they select their artifacts, students need to consider the “usual” aspects of multimodality—for instance, the interplay of image, text, color, space, and so forth—but also the haptic (tactile) aspect as well. After they’ve selected their artifacts, they need to consider the presentation (how will they affix their artifacts to the page? How many artifacts to a page?) and the organization of their artifacts (in which order should they be presented and why?). In short, this project allows students to begin concretely visualizing how form impacts—and in some cases, becomes—the content.

Composing Graphic Narratives

For those interested in asking students to use graphic novels as mentor texts for composing their own graphic narratives, we offer an additional assignment we have experienced success with and that our students have found useful: the traditional print graphic novel. This assignment naturally pairs well with any of the three graphic novels we have discussed in this article. While we have provided three specific assignments based on the three texts we recommend, we also believe it is important to offer a multimodal project that can be used with any of the graphic novels. The graphic narrative is a natural assignment to pair with any graphic novel and can allow students to use their experiences reading a graphic novel to guide their composing processes. In fact, we have incorporated this assignment (or a version of it) in our teacher education and composition and rhetoric classes on multiple occasions. As such, we suggest having students compose graphic narratives by tasking students with analyzing the form of one of the graphic novels we describe above and then creating their own graphic text representing their analysis of that textual form (i.e., mimicking the form of the graphic novel). In other words, students use similar approaches to the author(s) and texts they analyzed to create their own graphic novel. We find this assignment fosters critical thinking, problem solving, ability to compose in non-traditional ways, and overall learning. To provide a clearer view of the project we use, a sample prompt might read:

For this assignment, your task is to compose your own graphic narrative based on your analysis of one or more of our in-class readings (you may also propose a graphic text you’ve read outside of class). As such, you will select a text, study/analyze the methods of the comic artist or graphic novelist, and mimic those approaches in the creation of your own graphic narrative.

The specific requirements vary for us. Ultimately, it comes down to our purpose and what we want students to experience and to wrestle with, but we often provide basic parameters (e.g., 6-8 pages of graphic text with 3-6 panels on each), and encourage students to make intentional decisions for themselves, and we often ask them to articulate their reasons to us throughout the composing process. These parameters are meant to serve simply as guidelines and not as rules or constraints. The goal, after all, is for students to create a composition that demonstrates their ability to analyze the form of a mentor text and apply, by mimicking, that skill to their own creations.

We also provide students with examples of composing methods. For example, we discuss Microsoft Word and Power Point, Comic Life, hand drawing, collage, and other options available to students. Here, we want students to make intentional decisions as to how they create their graphic narratives. To ensure students can maximize their time working on the project and not on learning new programs, we take the time in class to walk students through how to use the technology and digital tools. Regardless of the approach used, we encourage teachers to provide

adequate class time to model for students, to answer all technical questions, and to discuss examples from other students.

Assessing Multimodal Composing Projects

As part of this conversation, it is important to discuss the role of assessment in multimodal composing. This can be yet another challenge for teachers less familiar with incorporating multiple modes of communication into their classrooms. In fact, multimodal projects often become add-ons to more traditional composing assignments (e.g., now that you've written a character analysis essay, create a picture representing your character) and are often assessed as such (e.g., not including the visual creation component on the character analysis essay rubric). Valuing multimodal projects as important and academically sanctioned literacy practices requires teachers to rethink traditional methods of assessment to include non-traditional elements and rhetorical situations.

We suggest constructing and using a rubric designed specifically to evaluate multiple modes and important rhetorical decisions, especially as teachers begin to familiarize themselves and their students with new composing methods. Moreover, we encourage teachers to consider including students in developing relevant and important assessment criteria for each project used in the classroom. This can provide students with opportunities to develop a language for talking about assessment and to consider just what it is that makes the use of multiple modes effective in their own composing processes. It is also quite beneficial to engage students in self-assessment and peer-evaluation. These practices require reflection, metacognitive thought, and critical thinking, which can increase learning and abilities to compose.

For those interested in criteria to use as a starting point, we offer three such suggestions. First, Wyatt-Smith and Kimber (2009) offer a framework from which to draw. They suggested three principles, including ensuring teachers and students share a common language for discussing assessment, using dynamic tools as part of the assessment process, and involving both the product and the process in assessment. Likewise, the authors provided several concepts for teachers to consider when designing assessment. These include (1) design, (2) visualization, (3) modal affordances, and (4) modal cohesion. Incorporating these concepts can aid teachers in going beyond a holistic impression of a student composition to focus on both individual modes and the ways in which the chosen modes work synergistically.

Second, we have previously written (Cook & Kirchoff, 2015) about multimodal assessment for teachers, which we feel can help teachers begin to make a smooth transition to assessing multimodal projects as well. Here, we offer four elements for use in rubric design:

1. Linguistic design focuses on the use of alphabetic text.
2. Visual design involves the use of visuals and visual organization/layout to add meaning.
3. Auditory design includes the incorporation of sound.
4. Overall design places emphasis on the creation of a coherent whole.

Depending on the project assigned, teachers can select any combination of these criteria to create a relevant rubric. Regardless of the criteria selected, we have experienced success using a five-point scale, in which a score of one represents poor cohesion and five represents excellent cohesion. Total points can be easily added together and converted into a more traditional grading scale or aligned with a standards-based grading approach.

Third, to further assist teachers with beginning to think about their own ways of assessing student compositions as effective texts that use a variety of modalities, we offer a brief discussion of a rubric we constructed (see Appendix for complete rubric) as part of our own classroom teaching. Our goal was to create an instrument that fostered objective and rigorous analysis and assessment of our students' graphic compositions, specifically the ways in which they utilize multiple modes of communication to craft rhetorically savvy texts. Similar to the criteria described above, we incorporated a Likert scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) with this rubric, as it allows for efficient evaluation of student work. The rubric itself is comprised of four overall categories, each containing multiple assessment statements that we change or tweak depending on the assignment. In constructing the categories (audience and purpose, organization and modality, rhetorical decisions, and content), we borrowed from VanKooten's (2013) suggestions for assessing students' uses of new media. To ensure the rubric accurately accounts for the context (i.e., the local classroom) in which students compose, teachers may also include two additional categories (peer review and revision, and conventions). Using these categories to drive student assessment can allow educators to quickly and reliably assess the work students create.

One final assessment-related method we often incorporate involves engaging students in reflection. For us, reflection is a vital component of multimodal composition and assessment, as it requires students to think deeply about the approaches they utilized and to walk readers (and themselves) through the rhetorical decisions they made. This student reflection is not only metacognitive in nature, but it allows the teacher clearer insight into student process, experience, and product, so it serves a wonderful assessment purpose. Likewise, it promotes self-assessment. Anyone interested in incorporating a reflective component can select prompts that intentionally focus students on specific aspects of the composition or may choose to be more holistic in nature. While the examples provided below are not meant to serve as prompts for any and all multimodal composing, we have often provided our students with versions of the following. In your reflection, you should discuss:

- the decisions you made regarding images, text, color, and/or any other mode you utilized. Please offer textual evidence by pointing your reader to specific components of your composition (feel free to make this a hybrid essay and include visuals of your examples).
- your composing process. What process did you use and why? What frustrated you or was difficult? What did you enjoy?
- your self-evaluation of your product.
- your opinions of the educational merit of the project.

Ultimately, classroom teachers are best situated to make assessment decisions for their own students. After all, no one knows a classroom community like the teacher. As such, we encourage teachers to use their knowledge of their students to drive all assessment (and instruction, for that matter) decisions. Our hope is that the three rubric and assessment suggestions provided here serve as a starting point for teachers and as frameworks for organizing their own assessment ideas and approaches.

Conclusion

As we have discussed, it continues to be important to engage students with multimodal texts in order to help them develop vital multimodal literacy skills (Serafini, 2014). Graphic novels serve as a great site for sponsoring this literacy development in students (Frey & Fisher, 2008;

Fisher & Frey, 2011, 2014; Jacobs, 2007; Smetana, 2010). Moreover, the skills gained from reading and composing multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, are transferable to other literacy practices, including traditional alphabetic text consumption and composition (Frey 2003; Frey & Fisher, 2008).

To further this discussion, we have offered suggestions for using three graphic novels as mentor texts and shared accompanying multimodal composition assignments to use with students. First, we discussed *The Photographer* by Guibert and Lefèvre, which includes a combination of actual photographs and comic paneling, art, and text, as a way to allow students to examine the ways in which illustrations and photographs can work collaboratively to tell a story. Paired with that text, we shared a photo essay assignment, where students must make authorial decisions (e.g., organization and diverse visual representations) to compose a comprehensive narrative.

Second, we argued for the use of the digital comic, *Operation Ajax* by Burwen and De Seve. This text offers readers a unique interactive and immersive experience, similar to gaming or film, and can help students make meaning from layered modalities, such as movement, sound, and interactivity. Additionally, the text offers support for pacing and information literacy by providing background knowledge through documents and source material. To accompany *Operation Ajax*, we suggested a multimedia presentation, where students create meaning through the use of digital affordances, including sound, motion, and reader interaction.

The third text we suggested was *Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow?* by Fies, a text that weaves together photographs, newspaper articles, and other cultural artifacts. This eclectic collection of materials and modalities can be used to help readers analyze text and evaluate the ways in which form can inform content. To foster composition of a similar text, we shared a scrapbook assignment, which encourages students to synthesize a variety of artifacts to compose a coherent text.

To further assist teachers, we have also shared an assignment for composing graphic narratives, as well as ideas for assessing students' multimodal compositions. Our suggestions are meant to stimulate ideas among educators by providing brief explanations of the texts, assignments, and assessment strategies that have worked well for us. It is important, however, to recognize that there are many other useful texts (e.g. Chris Ware's *Building Stories*, Will Eisner's *A Contract with God, and Other Tenement Stories*, Zeina Abirached's *A Game For Swallows*, Liz Prince's *Tomboy*, Lucy Knisley's *Relish: My Life in the Kitchen*, and Scott McCloud's *The Sculptor*, to name a few) and myriad other valuable assignments (e.g., collage, game comic, narrative database, etc.) possible. Likewise, each of the assignments we provided can be tweaked to meet any instructor's classroom goals and objectives. Finally, although we, and our students, have experienced success with the texts and assignments described here, we encourage teachers to continue looking for other engaging, rigorous ways to help students develop the multimodal literacy skills relevant in our 21st century world.

While our piece offers valuable ways that graphic novels can be used as multimodal literacy sponsors and mentor texts, we do acknowledge that more research could help work towards a larger understanding of the role(s) of graphic novels in multimodal literacy instruction, including graphic novels as mentor texts for a variety of multimodal compositions. Specifically, the field might benefit from moving beyond anecdotal stories regarding the use of graphic novels as multimodal literacy sponsors by offering quantitative and qualitative studies. These studies could offer more concrete evidence regarding the veracity of graphic novels as multimodal literacy sponsors.

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Appendix

Multimodal Composition Rubric

Note:

1 = Strongly Disagree

3 = Neutral

5 = Strongly Agree

Category One: Audience and Purpose

Through the conscious use of multiple modes, the author clearly establishes a purpose for the text.

1 2 3 4 5

Through the conscious employment of multiple modes, the author's intended audience is apparent.

1 2 3 4 5

Category Two: Organization and Modality

Multiple modes (image, text, sound, motion) are employed.

1 2 3 4 5

The modes used in the text are complementary (in regards to content) with one another.

1 2 3 4 5

The modes used in the text are complementary (in regards to placement) with one another.

1 2 3 4 5

The modes used are employed with readability and consumption in mind.

1 2 3 4 5

The modes used are formatted appropriately and correctly so that access is not an issue.

1 2 3 4 5

The modes used are the best modal choices for the intended audience.

1 2 3 4 5

The modes used are the best modal choices for achieving the author's purpose.

1 2 3 4 5

Category Three: Rhetorical Decisions

If text is used, the font/typography is appropriate for the purpose and audience of the text.

1 2 3 4 5

If sound is used, the tonal quality is appropriate for the purpose and audience of the text.

1 2 3 4 5

If text and/or image used, the color choices positively impact the purpose of the text.

1 2 3 4 5

If sound or video is used, the length of the clips is appropriate for the purpose and audience of the text.

1 2 3 4 5

Through the use of multiple modes, relevant allusion, metaphor, metonymy, or synecdoche is achieved.

1 2 3 4 5

Category Four: Content

Through the conscious use of multiple modes, the author makes meaningful commentary regarding the topic at hand.

1 2 3 4 5

Through the conscious use of multiple modes, the author develops an idea relevant to the class material.

1 2 3 4 5

Landscape, Language, Re-/Connection: Locating and Re-/Connecting to Place in David Bouchard's Cultural Books

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Abstract

David Bouchard bridges cultures in his dual language cultural books through the parallel lenses of cultural capital and cultural literacies. Through representations of the Canadian landscape, and in Indigenous, Michif, and European-descended languages, Bouchard creates narratives of place through poetry, storytelling, and descriptive chirography. The texts, which are complemented by prominent Indigenous artists' illustrations and music, embody a bridge to readers from a multiplicity of cultures. Bouchard's dual language cultural books, demonstrative of the reclamation of Indigenous and Métis history and narrative, can be used as texts of social justice to explore Indigenous cultures, language revitalization, and language maintenance. Bouchard negotiates the Indigenous/Inuit/Métis and mainstream cultures of his ancestry through the underpinning terms of landscape and language and, ultimately, finds a home within multiple cultures which he shares with readers so that they might find their home, too.

Keywords

Bouchard; Michif; Cree; Delaware; Kwak'waka; Mi'kmaq; Ojibway; Innu; Lenape; Indigenous; Canadian; reading; new literacies; cultural texts; dual language texts; picture books; history; environment; citizenship; social justice; cultural books

Introduction

David Bouchard bridges cultures through his dual language "cultural books"¹ and the visual art that amplifies them. Dual language books are those which move between two languages and often feature illustrations that represent or extend the textual narrative (Naqvi, Thorne, Pfitscher, Nordstokke, & McKeough, 2012, p. 4). Dual language books support literacy development amongst early readers (Cummins, 2007; Ma, 2008) as well as emergent literacy learners (Naqvi, McKeough, Thorne & Pfitscher, 2012; Naqvi, Thorne, Pfitscher, Nordstokke & McKeough, 2012). Bouchard's texts are dual language in that the narratives are visually present in two languages: either English or French and an Indigenous language. Some of the texts also feature CDs on which the narrative is read in several Indigenous languages. While Bouchard's texts are often to be found in children's literature sections in bookshops and libraries, he has indicated a preference for his texts to be referred to as cultural books,² suggesting the possibility for the books to be used beyond the elementary school level to explore culture and the representation of culture and, by extension, as texts of social justice education. Bouchard's texts occupy the space suggested by his term 'cultural book' in that the texts consciously and explicitly engage with culture, and its interconnections with language and place and history, within

¹ Bouchard, D. (nd). *Education Today cover story: On becoming a reader*. Retrieved from: <http://www.davidbouchard.com/About.html>.

² Bouchard, D. (nd). *Education Today cover story: On becoming a reader*. Retrieved from: <http://www.davidbouchard.com/About.html>.

specifically Canadian landscapes. Bouchard's beautifully illustrated, creative, poetic texts are social and political commentaries on re-/connection from his late-to-life understanding of his own marginalized cultural histories. The texts explicitly reflect particular geographies and histories. From the windswept Prairie to the jagged beauty of the West Coast, the narrative and the illustrations are woven together to create a picture of re-/connection for readers. In many ways Bouchard's texts reflect Lorimer's (1993) description of cultural publishing as inclusive of "social and political commentary, minority group voices, regional titles, poetry, in short, books published for their original ideas or creative expression" (p. 212). The stunning illustrations that support the narrative range from symbolic representations created in response to the textual cues to documentations of the artist's lived experience.³

Several concepts underpin the approach taken to Bouchard's texts in this article. One is Bourdieu's (1973) notion of cultural capital, an asset Bouchard began 'accumulating' only as an adult and therefore only then able to celebrate. Another is Freebody and Luke's (1990) acknowledgement of the historical and cultural determinants of literacy performance, here considered specifically in socio-cultural terms and the several related roles readers can assume in critical terms in engaging with Bouchard's dual language texts (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p.7). The cultural capital and expanded sense of literacy Bouchard gains he shares generously with his readership through his texts, creating a link and sense of potential connection to a culture which the reader may or may not share. Through the underpinning terms of language and landscape, Bouchard explores his expanded sense of cultural capital and literacies to support his agency, reclaiming his Indigenous/Inuit/Métis cultural heritages to create a sense of place: home.

Finding Place, Finding Home

This article was born out of an interest in social justice that blossomed while I was teaching in a remote northern Cree reserve community, an experience that shifted my academic and pedagogical direction entirely. When I sit down to write, I envision former Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit students I had the good fortune to teach and by whom I was taught. Now I also have the privilege to see their beautiful and rapidly growing children. With the recent calls made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a social shift appears to be beginning, so that when I think of what postsecondary schooling will be like for these former students' children when they are grown I have hope that the shift is a positive one. I am a White woman, and it was on 'the rez' that I became aware of my own privileged position and understood that the opportunities I had enjoyed were directly linked to my cultural position. Each time that I sit down to engage with Cree literature, I think of former students, now demonstrating leadership in many ways in their community. That sense of responsibility they endowed, embedded in their trust, is with me as strongly now as it was when they surprised me by asking after only a month of school if I would return to teach them the next year. I have been given the privilege of being able to observe the students' success and I have wished for them to see their culture in what they would learn in postsecondary schooling, should they wish to pursue that route, just as I had seen my own culture unquestionably in the curriculum throughout my years in school. I grew up in the Maritimes with European-descended roots on both sides of the family. The majority of my peers had similar backgrounds. The curriculum taught us primarily about the accomplishments of Europeans and the European descendants of our cultural groups, although an elective option for a single Native

³ The illustrations are not reproduced within the article due to copyright concerns and, simply, small reproductions would not do them justice.

Studies class was offered in Grade 12, so we rarely thoughtfully considered alternative histories or narratives.

The students to whom I taught Language Arts and English in the far north, without being aware of it, were teaching me how to become a border crosser (Giroux, 1992). While they daily moved fluidly between Cree and English, their movement illustrated for me the epistemological, political, cultural, and social margins from and with which they engaged (Giroux, 1992, p. 28). In a new and unfamiliar environment where I was located as Other, yet welcomed, I began to appreciate the strengths and limitations of the frames of our inherited locations (Giroux, 1992, p. 28). Rather than reversing the paradigm of Us versus Them, the border crossing the students demonstrated, and which I began to try to emulate, offered us the opportunity to grow together. In so doing, I began to recognize some of the limitations of the pedagogy which I had brought with me and I began to look for new ways of being in the classroom. Without realizing it, the students' code-switching (Stigter, 2006), or their fluid movement between languages (specifically Cree and English) invited me to begin my journey as a linguistic and cultural code-breaker, as Freebody and Luke (1990, p.7) term it, while I often tried to press friends who spoke the language fluently to put the verbal lessons they were teaching me to written form so that I could study it. While I could sound out the letters in simple texts in Cree that used standard Roman orthography, and, later, in Inuktitut, and at times recognize simple words or parts of words, my later progress with Cree and Inuktitut syllabics was much more painfully slow.

As I began to examine available dual language texts that would help me learn about the students' language and culture and help them to see themselves in the curriculum, thereby recognizing their cultural capital, I began to reflect upon how such texts were and could be read. When I had an opportunity at the postsecondary level to introduce mainly White pre-service teachers to a variety of Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit texts that they could add to their teaching repertoires, the texts often became launching points for discussions related to my experiences in northern Canada and in the Arctic Circle and, by extension, they often led to substantive discussions of broader issues of social justice. Exploring dual language texts such as those like David Bouchard's picture books offers a rich opportunity for expanding the role of literature-based study in social justice pedagogy. Bouchard offers insights into social justice through his reclamation of his Indigenous/Inuit/Métis cultural heritages, affirmed through the themes of and engagement with language and landscape and supported in the paratextual melodies and songs that frame his narratives and create an undeniable sense of place and belonging.

Bouchard's texts embody and are exemplars of his search for and re-/connection to place. Just as he became a kind of code-breaker of his own linguistic—and cultural—'ancestral paths' (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p.7), slowly building his cultural capital, so too does he invite his readers to do the same. Bouchard's numerous historical and cultural determinants of literacy performance become clearer in tandem with his gains in knowledge about his Indigenous roots. In reading his past through new socio-cultural lenses and sharing the narratives he learns through his role as raconteur, he supports an expanded notion of literacy development in others. His texts lend themselves to reading through the lens of Freire's (1971) teacher-learner/learner-teacher paradigm (p.56). As Bouchard teaches his readers about the Indigenous cultures and languages and narratives in Canada, so does he expand his understanding of his own cultural and linguistic history and place, rendering in literary form Freire's (1985) notion of conscientization, recognizing the dynamic mode of the construction of the world. In engaging with Bouchard's texts, reading is "preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically interconnected" (Freire, 1987, p.29). With each new text and engagement with Indigenous

language(s), Bouchard brings his awareness of the world to his writing and his awareness of the world shifts again.

Also underpinning this article is Bourdieu's (1973) notion of cultural capital. When one's culture is communicated freely in classroom and privileged parents possessing greater cultural capital help students master standard school curriculum and participate in the school community, such students (I recognize myself here, in retrospect) are often able to achieve greater academic success (DiMaggio, 1982; Lareau, 1987; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Sullivan, 2001). While I quickly recognized the disconnect between home culture and school culture for the northern Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit students I taught, I had limited means and knowledge on how to address it at the time. In Nunavut, while Inuit *Quajimajatuqangit*, which refers to traditional knowledges, values, and skills, are incorporated into the Arctic school curriculum, in the school at which I spent a year there was a clear divide between those who felt confident in teaching provincial curriculum and those confident in Inuit *Quajimajatuqangit* (traditional knowledges, values, and skills) with strong local cultural knowledge. The students benefited from both forms of expertise. Bouchard, successful in the school environment and able to enjoy a career as a teacher and principal, was clearly possessed of one form of cultural capital. Later in life, when he began to engage with his Indigenous ancestry, he was able to access and celebrate another form of cultural capital. In connecting and re-connecting to the landscapes through which he moves, and through exploring the directions in which language and memories take him, Bouchard creates cultural books that invite in a range of audiences, from early readers to educators, from those beginning to learn about an Indigenous culture to those maintaining their Indigenous language(s). The cultural capital Bouchard gains through his continued exploration of his ancestry and subsequently in sharing through his cultural books, creates a link and sense of potential connection to a culture which the reader may or may not share.

Bouchard uses his dual language texts to create a 'home' through language and landscape in which he reclaims his historical and present Indigenous, Inuit, and Métis cultural heritages. Bouchard was unaware until he was an adult that he might be possessed of additional forms of cultural capital, narratives, and literacies. In his journeys to reclaim silenced cultural capital for himself and his daughter, Bouchard celebrates the family's cultural heritage. His subsequent creation of cultural texts supports literacy development and Indigenous language revitalization and maintenance for his readers. Bouchard's dual language texts can be used as part of a decolonizing pedagogy. His reclamation of ancestral cultural narratives invite multiple forms of audience reading strategies and similarly invite reflection upon the interconnections of identity, landscape, language, and literacy. Bouchard's own shared code-breaking, both linguistic and cultural, (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p.7) reinforces his connection to landscape. Underpinned by language and landscape, the sense of agency and evolving cultural capital that Bouchard claims create for him a sense of place and a coming home to his predecessors' narratives and literacies.

Implications of a Decolonizing Pedagogy

Social Justice and Reclaiming Narratives

Bouchard's texts can be employed as part of a decolonizing pedagogy, such as through critical literacy and the lens of social justice. Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002), in exploring sociopolitical issues in critical literacy, note the connection of literacy to cultural citizenship and its relationship to consciousness as an underpinning element to praxis (p. 383-384). The significance of a sense of cultural citizenship is underscored in many of Bouchard's cultural books.

The Song Within My Heart (2002b) for example, which won the 2004 Governor General's Award, shares the narrative of a boy preparing for a significant cultural event: his first pow-wow. The Grandmother, Nokum, teaches her grandson that there are stories and songs that are a part of his learning journey that belong to him as much as his own heart. She asserts how he deserves to possess and celebrate story as cultural capital:

A story is a sacred thing
That should be passed from age to youth
I choose to share my best with you
That you might own and share them too. (2002b, np)

Bouchard's attempts to reclaim the narratives of his past and his linguistic history resonate from the page. He models for readers his own imaginative process of becoming, as Freebody & Luke (1990) term it, a text participant (p.7), drawing upon his newly gained cultural knowledge. As with other texts, through the narrator's voice, Bouchard acknowledges his grandmother's influence and reaches out explicitly to his audience:

If you, dear reader, hear me sing
And can't make out my message
You should not fret, I was like you
I had to learn to listen too! (2002b, np)

It is, ultimately, his re-/connection with his grandmother that leads him to his success, based in his reclamation of his own language and narrative history and his care for and connection with the land—those elements underpinning cultural capital. Becoming a "text participant", as suggested through his work, is a constantly evolving process. Whether Bouchard's texts demonstrate a rhyming scheme in English or take the form of fluid prose poetry, his rich intersections and interstices invite many forms of study. Whyte (2002) celebrates the non-translatability of foreign-language poetry, which can be extended here in reference to the challenge of reading and interpreting the translations of Bouchard's poetic narrative: "What matter [sic] most are the places one cannot understand, the ones that fail to make sense" (p. 68). Such places mark opportunities for growth as cultural readers, engaging even more deeply with the culture being represented. To reclaim his Indigenous/Inuit/Métis cultural heritages and create a sense of place, Bouchard had to learn to listen carefully and to pay attention in the process of gaining cultural capital. In so doing, he was able to celebrate his self-embodiment of the teacher-student/student-teacher paradigm (Freire, 1971) and his newfound ability to engage as a text participant (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p.7) in new contexts. Bouchard's participation in textual meaning-making is embodied in his acts of learning about his ancestral cultures through his explorations of family memories. These acts of engagement help him to discover previously unknown Indigenous narratives and he integrates these narratives and ideas into his familial story. Bouchard not only seeks to expand his understanding of place for himself and his daughter but shares his journey through narrative to draw attention to and dialogue about the positive impact of cultural awareness. The texts themselves stand as acknowledgement of the multiplicity of historical and cultural determinants of literacy performance. His engagement in the narratives and traditions and pictorial representations of his Indigenous predecessors is represented in numerous forms through Bouchard's dual language cultural books. Bouchard's border-crossing (Giroux, 1992) texts,

inspired by his daughter and enabled by his grandmother, invite and encourage his readers to become border-crossers themselves.

Alternative Reading Strategies/Alternative Audiences

Reading Bouchard's dual language texts with a close eye leads to a potential variety of reading strategies in support of building cultural capital. The texts also lend themselves to be interesting to a variety of readers or text users. Gentes' (2013) work with self-translated texts might be extended, arguably, as a frame for engaging with Bouchard's texts. Gentes identifies four potential groups of readers: monolingual and bilingual readers, language learners, and literary scholars. She suggests that different text users employ the following divergent reading strategies in engaging with texts: "only one version is read; one version is read, while the other is only consulted when necessary; both versions are read in a comparative manner, successively or simultaneously" (p. 271). Bouchard's texts, however, bear examining beyond a limiting emergent literacy or elementary language arts framework. They offer rich opportunities for supporting Indigenous language revitalization and language maintenance. For Indigenous language learners, Bouchard's texts are accessible for several reasons. First, they are quite literally accessible since they are available through mainstream publishers. Second, they are accessible in terms of content. Third, they are accessible in terms of language: the Indigenous language is not only paralleled with English text but the entire text is aurally available on a CD so that readers can hear what the language sounds like when spoken by an Indigenous speaker. Bouchard's texts have a potentially important role to play in language revival or language maintenance for language learners.

Dual language cultural books such as Bouchard's can be read and interpreted in many ways. The extra-textual or paratextual features of such texts can add to or complicate one's understanding, based on one's cultural positioning and cultural capital. Not only can Bouchard's texts serve to support language revitalization or language maintenance, they can offer audiences who might not otherwise have contact with the culture represented in the text an opportunity to learn about the language and landscape and music of the culture. Because the CDs also offer music that complements and contextualizes the Michif or Indigenous language, they support forms of textual code-breaking/participation/use/analysis through cultural border-crossing and individual re-examination of reading and learning paradigms (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Freire, 1971, 1985, 1987; Giroux, 1992) that leads Bouchard and his readers to a sense of home. In terms of accessibility and invitation to engage in a participatory manner with the text, Bouchard's works are exemplars of how texts can be read at a variety of reading levels and through a range of lenses. For literary scholars, and also for educators of pre-service teachers, reading these texts can support social justice pedagogy and forms of border-crossing (Giroux, 1992) and the texts offer dialogic opportunities for a range of individual readers and reading communities. The uncomplicated diction also renders the texts accessible by younger readers—for whom "picture books" are usually intended. They can be read by middle years students learning about histories and cultures or learning to create texts and art works of their own. They can be read by educators using inclusive and multicultural texts in their classrooms. They can be read by environmentalists who want to protect the land. And they can be read for the pleasure of the languages and images presented on the pages. Because the text is arranged in such a way as to render it accessible, with English or French and Michif or Cree or Kwak'waka or Mi'kmaq or Ojibwe placed in parallel forms and with a CD that offers a fluid audio reading of the First Nations or Métis language and musical contextualization, the texts create a bridge between European-descended storytelling and Indigenous' traditions. Here there are rich opportunities for border-crossing and all of the intrinsic

challenges and opportunities therein. The texts demonstrate a range of historical and cultural determinants of literacy performance and the related critical literacy roles readers can assume in engaging with Bouchard's dual language cultural books.

Bouchard's texts often demonstrate his careful sense of self-reflection and subjectivity and responsibility to his predecessors, providing them with the voice that they were neither permitted nor given an avenue to share. On Bouchard's website, he mourns that he does not know his grandmother's stories and songs or her grandmother's stories and songs—their cultural capital: “When I share Native and Métis stories and songs with my daughter Victoria, I tell her that I don't know which belong to us and that until such time that I do, she can claim them all as her own” (nd).⁴ His daughter, then, represents yet another group of text users (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p.7): those who have been separated from their ancestral culture(s) and are seeking to learn about and reconnect with their respective traditions. Bouchard models a form of migration between cultures as he seeks to span diverse cultures in linguistic and visual terms. He is, in some ways, both an author and a theorist, consciously engaging with language and culture and seeking to create his place—a home that feels authentic on many levels. Williams (2013) notes that “It is striking how many theorists are migrants, either by choice or necessity. Migration, itself an act of translation, inevitably entails an encounter with the Other . . . A significant number of theorists are (bilingual) speakers of minority languages and have therefore been confronted with issues of language and power, in which translation is inevitably implicated” (p. 120). While Bouchard's texts are translated by fluent Indigenous language speakers, it is interesting to consider the degree to which Bouchard also feels himself a cultural migrant, engaging in issues of language and power through writing his narratives of Indigeneity in the dominant languages of English and French. Bouchard's acts of migrancy, or border-crossing, through landscape and language and culture through his texts act as reclamation and embrace of his grandmother's power and history and connection to the land for her granddaughter and of his own connection to the Métis unarticulated, in some ways untranslatable, narratives. His celebration of the marked growth of his cultural capital and access to ancestral memory through his grandmother provides a demonstration of and an opportunity for readers to engage with notions of place and cross-cultural communication.

Creating Connections and Identities

Bouchard's dual language texts are an open journey of re-/connection to cultural capital in linguistic, visual, and physical terms. Cultural capital translates into an expanded sense of identity and with it expanded literacies, which he shares not only with his daughter but with his readership. His texts might best be described as “crosscultural poetics in dual discourse” (Hokenson, 2013, p. 54), as he links language and place to identity formation and, by extension, to a larger sense of community with his readership. His literary engagement with and reclamation of his cultural and linguistic histories demonstrates how such literacy can serve to support “individual and social emancipation and the foundation of civilization” (Lorimer, 1993, p. 204), particularly when readers are interacting critically with texts as text analysts (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p.7). In the preface of the text *Seven Sacred Teachings of White Buffalo Calf Woman: Niizhaaswi Gagiikwewin*, Bouchard writes:

⁴ Bouchard, D. (nd). *Métis heritage: My story is that of many Métis*. Retrieved from: <http://davidbouchard.com/about>.

It is our hope that this telling will unite and thus heal divisions. Prophecies tell that this is the time for One Heart, One Mind and One Drum. We, readers and authors alike, are the ones we have been waiting for.

Inashke owe dibaajimowin mii'omaa ge-ondinamang, ji-okonoojimooyamg. Ogowe gichi-anishinaabeg giwindamaagonaang ningo-naanaagadawendamowin, ningode', dewe'igan. Gaa-agindaasoyang gaye gaa-ozhibii'igeyang, miiwag ogowe gaabaaii'angwaa apane. (2009, np)

Even before one engages with the text, the impetus for connection is rendered clear.

Bouchard asserts the influence of his great-grandmother's spirit in uncovering his Métis heritage and genetic memories (nd).⁵ These genetic memories began his journey to his present understanding of himself and his place. His place, he proudly proclaims, is among the Métis nation. On the frontispiece of *The Secret of Your Name: Kiimooch ka Shinikashooyen*, there is a subtitle: *Proud to be Métis*. The narrator, Bouchard, who is pictured throughout the text's illustrations, shares that he hears his grandmother in his dreams then writes what he learns (2010, p. 24):

through song and dance and stories
I might come to know that which is mine.
Through memories you have taught me ...
Chi shapookishkaytamaan lii shaansoon pi lii daans pi lii zistwayr
Tadbaen ga paekishkayten kaykway ka tipaytamaan.
Aen ishi nakatwaytamaan kii kishkinamawin. (2010, p. 28)

The narrative mourns the loss of Bouchard's connection to the cultures and languages of his Anishnaabe, Montagnais, Chippewa, Menominee, Algonquin, and Ojibwa heritages. Again he writes of his grief at not knowing his grandmother's stories (2010, p. 20). The translation in Michif is "en face" to the English text: "Nokoom sid valeur chi itwaeyaan/ Nimoo gishkaytenn tii zistwayr" (2010, p. 21). In the foreword, Bouchard writes, "I am one whose grandmothers were Anishnaabe, Chippewa, Menominee and Innu" (2010, p. 2): "Miiya payek nookoomuk lii anishnabe, ojibwe, Menominee pi lii Innu" (2010, p. 4). He promises that not only will he seek out the songs that belong to him and claim them and teach them to his children (2010, p. 18) but he "will live [his] life to Honour [her]" (2010, p. 18)/ "Ga pimatishin chi kishchitaymitaan" (2010, p. 19), a living practice he underscores in his use of uppercase. Bouchard's search for identity, or perhaps more accurately, the identities and histories he did not know to claim as his own, emerged from the displacement of other Métis peoples like himself and the silencing of their narratives and literacies.

Finding and reclaiming silenced narratives and exploring new literacies underpins establishing both narrative and geographic place. Bouchard provides a model of reading through the lens (or lenses) of cultural identity/identities that can support Indigenous and non-Indigenous language and literacy learners. His texts invoke and invite alternative reading strategies and are inclusive in their strategic outreach to a variety of reading audiences. In connecting his work to the Truth and Reconciliation's Committee's call to actions, Bouchard states, "My work has shifted somewhat since the release of the TRC. Much of my focus now lies in the 'T'... Not the 'Truth' in

⁵ Bouchard, D. (nd). *Métis heritage: My story is that of many Métis*. Retrieved from: <http://www.davidbouchard.com/About>.

‘Truth and Reconciliation’, but rather in the ‘T’ that precedes it, ‘Trust’”.⁶ That intention of manifesting mutual trust, he suggests, can be established through the partnership created in moving forward together with common goals through the complex processes of literacy in reading, interpreting, and writing. Indeed, as Chief Justice Murray Sinclair stated firmly, “There can be no reconciliation without education”.⁷ Bouchard’s texts suggest that through revisiting stories of cultural identity, past and present, through a mutually respectful giving and receiving of narrative, reconciliation can occur.

Landscape

Bouchard’s Prairie Connection

The landscapes which have shaped Bouchard’s sense of identity underpins the terms he employs in his dual language texts to create a place in which he is able to reclaim his Indigenous/Inuit/Métis cultural heritages. In Bouchard’s texts, the Canadian landscape is foregrounded in the connection to home and the reclamation of cultural heritage. For example, in *Prairie Born*, written for his parents for their Golden Anniversary, he marries his poetry with Peter Shostak’s paintings to evoke the experience of growing up on the prairies: wide expanses of landscape, the hard work involved in farm life, and the simple pleasures of winter activities. The narrator asserts in the refrain that it is more than his memories that set him apart (1997, np). He acknowledges that the physical landscape had a formative role in his identity from infancy, noting that his “hair’s mostly wind . . . [his] eyes filled with grit/ . . . [his] lips chapped and split” (1997, np). Furthermore, the cold, the narrator suggests, has “taken the credit for what’s come to be me” (1997, np). I can still recall with clarity the walks that my Cree friends took me on in the remote northern Prairie landscape, showing me important rocks and sharing narratives, explaining how to offer tobacco to the land for the chokecherries gathered and sharing stories of picking herbs with their *kokums*⁸. Whenever I could make it back for a visit, I was always given a large bag of wild peppermint for my favorite tea. The landscape and climate have an indelible role in identity formation: written in the hair and on the skin, the environment of home leaves a marked imprint upon the physical bodies living within it. The impetus for connection, or reconnection, to home is tied to the landscape in remarkable and ineffaceable ways. The landscape itself is rendered part of Bouchard’s cultural capital.

Place shapes knowledge and understanding and experience, and can also underpin cultural capital and cultural determinants of literacy performance. Savage (2012) asserts that on the prairie “things hide in plain view” (p. 68) and the land invokes its inhabitants and travelers to “pay attention” (p.73). For *If You’re Not From the Prairie...*, which Bouchard dedicated to his parents, the cover features Henry Ripplinger’s representation of two children playing in the grass at the edge of a field of golden waving grain, grain elevators visible in the distance far beyond home and barn. The first image in the text, underlying the dedication and title of the text, offers the reader an image of the bright prairie sky. The text celebrates the unique relationship of prairie inhabitants with the expansive prairie sky, the flatness of the plain, the sound of swaying grasses and grains, and the hardy prairie trees. Bouchard teases Canadian readers who are not from the Prairies about

⁶ Bouchard, D. (nd). *Truth & reconciliation*. Retrieved from:
http://www.davidbouchard.com/speaking/truth_and_reconciliation.

⁷ Sinclair, M. 2015. *Building Bridges: Welcome*. University of Saskatchewan. 17 Nov.

⁸ Grandmothers.

knowing wind and cold: “You’ll not find among us a soul who can say:/ ‘I’ve conquered the wind on a cold winter’s day” (1993, np). In a refrain Bouchard revisited in *Prairie Born*, he shares:

My hair’s mostly wind,
My eyes filled with grit,
My skin’s red or brown,
My lips chapped and split. (1993, np)

As he draws the text to a close, Bouchard links his prairie soul inextricably to the landscape of his youth: the blizzards, the cold, the wind, the sky, the earth, the storms, the snow, and the sun, which are all a part of his mind and his heart (1993, np). Homages to the text’s prairie-born creators also peer out mischievously from the nostalgic images in the text. In the illustrations, the weathered homes and barns serve as backdrops to inhabitants who play, contemplate the land, and enjoy the Prairie’s picturesque sunsets. The strong sentiments of the text are echoed in the expansive illustrations, rendering explicit the strength of connection between Bouchard and the landscape in which he was born and spent many years.

The Canadian landscape defines his identity, his soul, his mind, and his heart, and Bouchard asserts in *Happy Centennial Saskatchewan* that the strength of his connection to the landscape endures. He acknowledges that he still thinks of the prairie landscape as home despite his absence from it, recognizing the prairie’s effect in shaping him (2004, np). The landscape inspires his earliest cultural capital and the accompanying forms of cultural literacies. References to the hard winter, a form of Prairie cultural capital shaped by hard experience, also appear in *Happy Centennial Saskatchewan*: “You can’t think of Saskatchewan/ Without thinking of winter” (2004, np). He writes of people’s pride in the provincial history, and one can almost hear the laughter in the narrative when he agrees, “Yet ask us what Saskatchewan is/And *we’ll* all say, ‘It’s winter’” (emphasis in original; 2004, np). As in *Prairie Born* and *If You’re Not From the Prairie*, the wind, the sun, the earth, the sky and the cold make appearances as formative entities to prairie character. The reader cannot but help be struck by the majestic depictions of the prairie sky, the wide expanses of grain fields, the snowy distances, the poignancy of the cemetery at Batoche, or the tree-rimmed lakes of northern Saskatchewan in this text complemented by Hans Herold’s paintings.

Bouchard’s West Coast Connection

The narrative of *The Colours of British Columbia* similarly reveals the strength of connection to land and landscapes articulated in both *Prairie Born* and *If You’re Not From the Prairie*.... Bouchard articulates his experience of the particular pigments that define the West Coast: “I was used to the colours I’d brought from the prairie and thought that I’d see little more” (emphasis in original; 1994, p. 8). His new exposure to colour shows him that in BC, colour is not simply landscape and season but rather in the very people who inhabit the province (1994, p. 29). While the landscapes against which Bouchard positions himself shift, so too does his expanding sense of himself shift as a border-crosser accumulating new awareness, new cultural capital, and new cultural literacies, celebrating the lessons he learns with his readers.

In *The Elders Are Watching*, Roy Henry Vickers’ illustrations help readers to visualize Bouchard’s verbal images of the West Coast landscape. The text’s images bear some particular attention, as it is Bouchard’s relationship with his place and space as facilitated by his Great-Grandmother that has precipitated much of his work. In “Thoughts” composed on the Tsartlip

Reserve and which precedes the narrative, Vickers notes, “Revival, culture, heritage, environment, these are key words for this last decade of the century. . . . Change comes from understanding . . . fostered from knowledge of our past, our cultural heritage, and our environment. . . . Such changes can affect our many relationships . . . and the one we have with our environment” (1990, np). Bouchard parallels this observation with “Whispers,” telling of a boy whose Ya’A⁹ told him narratives of “the Old Ones—the Elders. And as the stories slowly became part of him . . . he began to see them. They appeared as images suspended in the air, up toward the sun. Their lips were still, yet he heard them speak” (1990, np). The striking illustrations accompanying the text superimpose images of the Elders, the Old Ones, within the dramatic landscape of the West Coast. The spirit of Eagle is in the air and in the rock, the spirit of Fish and Whales in the water, the small spirits of Crabs and Fish and Birds in the sand, and the deforested mountain side is watched by an animal spirit observing from the moon. An image of abandoned decaying totems is juxtaposed with the relief of bright colors in other illustrations. Here, the images suggest, one is surrounded by cultural capital if one has the capacity to see—and read—it.

Language and landscape are inextricably linked; the environment shapes experience and language seeks to find ways to describe those experiences within that landscape. Bouchard uses his dual language texts to rediscover “home” in the environment. In the foreword to *The Elders are Watching*, ‘Whispers,’ the narrator notes: “The boy looked much the same as the other kids in his class. . . . it wasn’t his appearance that made him different. . . . He and his “Ya’A” would share the words of the Elders often with all those who cared to listen—with all those who cared at all” (1990, p. 7):

They told me to tell you the time has come.

They want you to know how they feel.

So listen carefully, look toward the sun.

The Elders are watching. (1990, p. 14, 22, 30, 38, 46, 54; emphasis in original)

This refrain recurs every fourth verse and closes the narrative. Despite the concern the narrative voice articulates from the Elders, the Elders wish to reinforce that it is not all comfortless (1990; p. 40). The Elders see reason for hope—that people are beginning to listen, to pay attention to the landscape and environment and to the messages that they, the Elders, attempt to share through voices such as the listening boy and his Ya-A.

Like the listening boy, Bouchard also explores the notion of listening to and reading the landscape with a fictionalized narrative of his French ancestry in *The Journal of Étienne Mercier: Queen Charlotte Islands 1853*, a text dedicated to his son Étienne. In “Mon Journal,” Étienne the voyageur writes: “I have been a voyageur, a trappeur, a coureur de bois and other thing [sic]. Today, I don’t know what I am” (1998, np). Like Étienne, Bouchard’s journey from “I don’t know what I am” (1998, np) to the embrace of his discovered/un-covered cultural heritage(s) with their accompanying culturally-determined literacies informs his shifting understanding of not only his own identity but his corresponding historical place, each with their own corresponding forms of cultural capital linked both to place and to the language of place.

The environment, it should be noted here, is not just the landscape of earth and water, but air and sky and moon and stars. The environment is a significant contributor to the landscapes in which Bouchard finds identity and agency and in which he discovers the path to his Indigenous/Inuit/Métis cultural homes, each with their own forms of cultural capital and cultural

⁹ Grandfather.

literacies. The stunning visual artistry of *Beneath Raven Moon* (2012) interweaves images evocative of photography with the unique West Coast style. Central to the text is the brilliantly golden illustration of the birth of Grandmother Moon. Brilliant colours epitomize, too, *The Seven Sacred Teachings of Buffalo Calf Woman*. The latter text also boasts a multilingual DVD, including English, French, Ojibwe, Bush Cree, South Slavey, and Chipewyan language. It is also worth mentioning here that an essential part of the landscape is the creatures that inhabit it. Bouchard's preface is complemented by an image of turtle, where the scutes of her carapace embody animals of air and land and water, rendering explicit the interconnectedness of animals, people, and the environment, a teaching rendered visually explicit again with the teaching on Love/Zaagi'idiwin. Together, language, land, and knowledge of its inhabitants form a cultural capital specific to place.

Language as Cultural Capital

The oral readings of Bouchard's texts on CD are underpinned and underscored by the complementary musical intervals that highlight melodies and beats ranging from Buffy Sainte-Marie to Northern Cree to Mary Youngblood playing the Native American flute, which, notably, Bouchard also plays during speaking engagements. These CDs are not only significant for independent reading but can become important teaching tools in the classroom. Greene (1978) notes that "Our seeing is affected by our culture, our experiences, and certainly by what we have learned" (p.192). So, too, what one is able to hear is affected by culture and experience. For me, the Northern Cree evoke warm memories of round dances and trying moose nose soup. Pautz (1998) asserts that teachers need to make the effort to understand the differences and similarities between their culture and that of their students (p.35), and the music and language of the CDs can help portray cultures that may or may not be shared by the teacher or members of the class, thus helping students to understand that there are variations in cultural capital and similar variations in understandings of literacy. Literacy in the Arctic, I was taught, also means being able to read the formation of snow on the landscape, i.e. being able to interpret the small, white waves formed by the wind during a blizzard, to engage thoughtfully with *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*, and to seek familiarity with the syllabic script. As a child, I had perceived literacy as being limited to reading a book.

Language spoken by native speakers carries musical cadences that can be missed by non-native or even non-local speakers. Place and home often carry particular cadences. The cadence of language is a significant support to agency in Bouchard's access to and re-/accumulation of cultural capital and the accompanying literacies. According to hooks (1995), we "attempt to recover ourselves and our experiences in language" (p. 301). In his attempt to recover himself and his experiences, Bouchard dedicates *Nokum is My Teacher* (2006), for which he won Bronze Medal in the Moonbeam Award, to his own Nokum, of whom he learned through an Odawa Elder. He recognizes his kokum's presence in his very genetic make-up and the memories he credits her sharing: "I recognize your presence and I celebrate our family's collective memories. Nokum, I know now that YOU are my teacher. My successes are OUR successes. Marcee..." (emphasis in original; 2007, np). His kokum's cultural capital, he asserts, is once more available, and he shares it so that other Métis readers like him can participate in the accumulation of cultural capital and cultural literacy as well as offering the opportunity to readers from other cultural groups. Like Savage (2012), Bouchard hears and follows the "Something [he] couldn't name . . . urging [him] on, challenging him to pay attention and remember. The imperative [that] seemed to emanate from the hills themselves, with their treasury of bones and stones and narratives" (p. 153). Bouchard's

attempts to recover himself and his familial, genetic history and memories occur through complex linguistic negotiation underpinned by his recovery of his links to the landscape. He treads the “pathways connecting household to household and household to the land; the pathways, worn by feet and honoured by stories” (Herriot, 2000, p. 40). Bouchard is indeed a cultural ambassador leading a new and inclusive path through his storytelling, his sharing of the treasury of narratives to which his *kokum* awakens him. Bouchard was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 2009.¹⁰ His stories represent his connection to and celebration of his re-discovered cultures, which are, as Herriot (2000) argues, “a membrane, marked by the local imprint of creation, through which we conduct a healthy interchange with the wild. A lithograph or *geograph* if you will, imprinted by the self-organizing networks of the land and made up of our stories, our beliefs, or pathways, our economies, and our work” (emphasis in original; p. 51). Shaped and framed by Canadian landscapes and its Indigenous languages, Bouchard’s linguistic negotiation leads on a journey to a cultural home that effectively spans the gaps between his French roots and his First Nations and Innu ones through his connection to the landscapes of home.

Bouchard’s texts can be examined for the insights into culture the illustrations might offer and for the narratives that appear in structurally parallel English or French and Michif or Cree or Kwak’waka or Mi’kmaq or Ojibwe. Reclaiming his cultural place/home is an act of agency that is supported in linguistic terms in each engagement with cultural border-crossing. Yet the narratives simultaneously suggest the impossibility of exact translation and certain limitations of understanding for readers unfamiliar with the Michif or Indigenous culture being represented in the text. For example, in Bouchard’s *Nokum is My Teacher* (2006), the speaker says to his grandmother, “You’ve taught me everything I know ... Piko kikway kâkiskitamân/ ê-kiskinohamôwihin” (np). Similar to what the reader understands of Étienne and his search for Clement, what is un/known about the culture and the environment being represented in the text defines how the reader engages with the text’s representations of literacies—cultural, linguistic, and visual. Bouchard’s texts challenge pre-existing interpretation strategies readers bring to their engagement with the text and so the texts support or can potentially scaffold cultural competence. The texts offer readers an opportunity to engage with and practice multifaceted reading strategies that can support multilingual and multicultural competencies that can lead to real shifts (Klimkiewicz, 2013, p. 199), such as that which is arguably being seen in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The texts also create a place for fruitful dialogue about texts in that Bouchard’s oeuvre represents and embodies his journey to discover his heritage and regain his languages and narratives and place(s). Because of his particular place in terms of citizenship, historically and socially and perhaps even geographically, he possesses an ability to shift fluidly between cultures and achieves linguistic success in negotiating languages in ways that were not permitted for his predecessors.

Bouchard’s dual language texts offers an opportunity for readers to become conscious of and examine the dynamics created in the juxtaposition and relationship of the languages presented on the page, just as landscapes juxtaposed with each other demonstrate their marked differences. Although written in English and translated, the dual language texts create a dialogic space in which discussion can occur about readings and “the gaps between the two versions, languages, and cultures” (Gentes, 2013, p. 268-9). Finding these gaps in meaning of which Gentes speaks, however, does require a level of fluency, or literacy, that many readers do not possess. However,

¹⁰ Bouchard, D. (2010). *David Bouchard named to the Order of Canada*. Retrieved from: <http://www.davidbouchard.com/about>

a first step towards dialogue with a linguistic community is the opportunity for listening made possible through text and the extra-textual support of audio text and music.

Like the landscapes of environments, one must learn to read to texts according to the specific markers presented. Bouchard uses his dual language cultural books to create a space and a home in which he reclaims his cultural heritage and citizenship and generously shares the cultural capital and cultural literacies he accumulates. Through his negotiation of multiple languages within the Canadian landscapes within which he moves, he creates a sense of place or home into which he invites the reader so that readers, too, can find their home. He negotiates the Indigenous/Inuit/Métis and dominant cultures of his ancestry through the underpinning terms of landscape and language and, ultimately, finds home within multiple cultures and histories. Through the dual language textual form in which he creates a sense of place, Bouchard creates a space of reclamation of his cultural heritage and we, as readers, are grateful for his generosity in sharing his wisdom.

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Learning to Teach through Writing with Students

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Abstract

This article presents a study of how dialogical notes can be used to inform teaching. A total of 43 pre-service teachers were asked to write dialogical notes back and forth with their students for one semester during their practicum in the elementary school. Their notes and reflections were analyzed to see what the pre-service teachers learned about their students through note writing. In addition, the impact of note writing on the pre-service teachers' teaching was also investigated. This article argues that dialogical notes serve as a viable tool for teachers to know students on a deeper level as well as to plan and adapt their teaching accordingly.

Introduction

In an era of mandate movements in the education world, curricula are often created top-down. For example, academic standards dictate what teachers are supposed to teach, which, in turn, decides what students learn in school. The top-down approach implies that the mandating agencies or teachers know better than students about what should be learned. This is in contrast to one of the most important tenets in education – building curricula on what students know or are interested in/concerned about. Harste (2008) recalled a story told by Arthur Combs in a keynote address at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association about how teachers usually see themselves, instead of their students, as foremost and central:

[H]e [Arthur Combs] was hired by the University of Florida to create a demonstration school. He said they had unlimited resources. Importantly, he got to select what teachers he wanted. Then not only did they design the school, but they also selected what furniture they wanted – tables instead of desks, walls that doubled as bulletin boards and whiteboards rather than wasted space. Instead of mandated textbooks they were able to select the instructional materials they wanted. They even, he reported, had the whole summer, on full salary, to plan the curriculum. ‘The problem,’ he said, ‘is we opened in the fall and they sent us the wrong damn children.’ (p. 36)

Though sarcastic, Combs' story brings to the fore the importance of knowing our students, which is often ignored. We as teachers often build our curriculum on what we remember about literacy instruction from our personal educational experiences. Harste (2008) argues, “One of the errors [he has] seen way too often is that teachers plan a child's instructional programs based on what they think they know about language and language learning without first finding out what the child already knows and understands” (p. 36).

Therefore, good teaching begins with knowing our students. In fact, literature on the importance of knowing students' prior knowledge on which to build curricula is not new to educators. For example, according to Dewey (2013), there are two sides to the educational process, and of the two sides, the psychological is the basis. He further proposes:

Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations. These powers, interests, and habits must be continually interpreted – we must know what they mean. They must be translated into terms of their social equivalents – into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service. (Dewey, 2013, p. 34)

Similarly, in line with Moll (1992a, 1992b), Conley (2008) argues that students bring to our classroom “funds of knowledge,” i.e., prior knowledge, that can be incorporated into our instruction. “Unfortunately,” Conley (2008) continues, “these assets are often hidden, ignored by teachers, or – worse – treated as deficits” (p. 41). Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) suggest:

[A]ll students are capable and bring a wide range of experiential, cultural, and linguistic resources to the classroom, [and] our job as teachers is to figure out ways to regularly use these resources and to give them a place of prominence in what counts in our classrooms. (p. 28)

The question is: how can we know the students better to inform our teaching? As a literacy/language arts teacher educator, I was interested in this question and wanted to know how it applied to the context of my own teaching. Specifically, I was curious about how one of my class assignments, i.e., the dialogical notes¹ assignment where pre-service teachers wrote dialogical notes with their elementary students, helped the pre-service teachers know and teach their elementary students. To turn this curiosity into an inquiry, I came up with two specific research questions as follows:

1. What did the pre-service teachers know about their students through the dialogical notes?
2. How did the pre-service teachers use the information they learned from the dialogical notes to inform their teaching?

With these two research questions in mind, I conducted a study based on the dialogical notes and reflections the pre-service teachers and their students completed. In what follows, I will present the findings of this study in detail. First of all, the context of the study, including the participants, will be described. This is followed by a discussion of the definition and theoretical basis of the dialogical notes. Then the themes that emerged from the analysis of the dialogical notes and reflections are presented to show what the pre-service teachers learned about their students from the notes (to address the first research question). Finally, the impact of note writing on the pre-service teachers' teaching is examined (to address the second research question).

Context

I teach in the teacher education program at a Midwestern university in the U.S. The university is located in a city where there are an increasing number of immigrant students. The student population is very diverse in one of the city's school districts with which I work closely in placing the pre-service teachers for their practicum. All schools in this school district include at least four racial/ethnic groups while most schools contain five or six. Yet most of the pre-service teachers in the teacher education program at my university are middle-class Caucasian and have little experience working with minority students. Most of them grew up and went to school with

peers like themselves. Therefore, the practicum provides a great opportunity for them to interact with students from diverse backgrounds.

A total of 43 pre-service teachers participated in this study in the spring 2016. There were 37 females and six males. Among them, two were African American and two were Hispanic. The rest of the participants were White. They were in the first of a series of three literacy methods courses required for the elementary teacher education program. The pre-service teachers taking my course were primarily in their junior year, and there was a practicum requirement (at least 30 hours) attached to the course. I was responsible for teaching the course as well as supervising their practicum.

Each pre-service teacher was assigned to work one-on-one with an elementary student during his/her practicum and required to write notes with the elementary student dialogically. The purpose of this assignment was to help the pre-service teachers understand their student as well as motivate their student to form the habit of, and enjoy, writing. This assignment was also tied closely to the lesson plan assignment the pre-service teachers had to complete at the end of the semester. Specifically, the pre-service teachers were required to create a lesson plan based on what they had learned about their student from the dialogical notes. In addition, the pre-service teachers had to connect their lesson plan to at least two class readings/articles.

The pre-service teachers were asked to introduce themselves to their student in the first note and invite their student to respond to their note. The back-and-forth note writing took place for the entire semester. The pre-service teachers wrote notes with their student while they were in the classroom or asked their student to do it at home, depending on how much scaffolding their student needed or whether there were other assignments on which they had to work in the classroom. At the end, the pre-service teachers should complete at least five notes and have at least five notes written by their student. In addition, each pre-service teacher and his/her student were asked to write a reflection, i.e., what they learned from this writing experience.

Previous Study and Theoretical Basis

The dialogical notes assignment was created based theoretically on my previous study (Lee & Lee, 2015) where notes were written in a home setting for approximately one year between me as the researcher and my daughter, Penn, as the co-researcher/participant. The written notes began with the topic on the St. Patrick's Day leprechaun. Penn learned about St. Patrick's Day in school. After that, she was very interested in the St. Patrick's Day leprechaun, an Irish fairy dressed in head-to-toe green, spending his time either making shoes or searching for gold (Kidzworld, 2014). One day, Penn drew a picture of a leprechaun and a picture of herself on one side of a card she made. She wrote on this side, "For the leprechaun" and "From Cheu-Jeys dolter [daughter] Penn" (to authentically present Penn's perspective, her writing is not corrected for grammatical/spelling errors throughout this article). Above her picture, she added a few words: "a pictuir of me." It appeared as if Penn thought she was only a child and had to introduce herself as "Cheu-Jeys dolter." On the other side of the card, she wrote:

Dear leprechaun

I love you and this pictuir I colord for you is for you and I always wanted to see how leprechauns look like. do you like green I bat you do and you like gold I know that. I love you leprechaun remember my name Penn.

Your Friend

Penn

She placed her card along with a few toy gold coins (as a gift for the leprechaun) on the floor close to the couch. She said that the leprechaun might come at night and write her back.

While Penn was sleeping, I read her card and felt compelled to respond to her – and I did. I wrote her back and signed my name as “Leprechaun.” She was so excited to see the response the next morning and wrote another note to the “Leprechaun.” After a week of back-and-forth writing, I told her honestly that I had written all the notes in the name of “Leprechaun” and apologized to her. She was disappointed and stopped writing to me for a few days, but forgave me at last. Hence, we continued writing to each other except that I changed my pen name from “Leprechaun” to “Leprechaun Dad.” We discussed many topics in our notes and wrote almost every day. We enjoyed the back-and-forth written conversations for approximately one year.

In line with Gee’s (1990) sociolinguistic theory, I (Lee & Lee, 2015) argued in my previous study that writing should be not only taught as an academic skill in school, but also acquired as a social practice situated within, and informed by, multiple Discourses, such as home, work, and church Discourses, which consist of all the beliefs, values, actions, etc. socially accepted in a sociocultural group and acquired through socialization. Following Heath (1983) and Street (1984, 1993, 1995), Gee (1990) advocates for a new formulation of literacy, in place of the traditional conception of literacy as the ability to read and write outside a social context, that “stresses the sorts of social practices in which reading, writing, and talking are embedded and out of which they develop, rather than the private cognitive ‘skills’ of individuals” (p. 49). Gee uses a “biker bar” example to illustrate that to be considered literate in the biker bar, we have to know what to say, how to say it, and what we are and do while we say it. Specifically, we need to play the “role” of a biker that is socially acceptable to other bikers in the bar. Gee (1990) calls such integral combinations of “sayings-doings-thinkings-feelings-valuing” ‘Discourse,’” (p. xv) which he elaborates on as follows:

A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network,” or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role.’ (Gee, 1990, p. 143)

Gee (1990) goes on to argue that “only within the context of the notion of Discourse that we can achieve a viable definition of ‘literacy’...” (p. 150). A Discourse is used as the standard to distinguish insiders who are considered literate in a group from outsiders who are considered illiterate in that group. For example, to be considered literate in a biker bar, we need to say something like “Gotta match?” instead of “May I have a match for my cigarette, please?” even though the latter is grammatically perfect (Gee, 1990, p. xv). This is why literacy is meaningful only within a social context, i.e., a Discourse. Hence, being literate is being fluent in a Discourse.

Similarly, writing as a form of literacy should be regarded not merely as an academic skill to master, but also as a social practice. In this sense, writing reflects our lived experiences. It is concerned with what we do, what we see, what we believe, how we feel, etc. In other words, writing provides an avenue through which we can understand, and be understood by, other people. In an educational context, educators can better understand their students through writing with them. Therefore, building on my previous study where notes were written dialogically between me and my daughter as a form of literacy situated in a social context, the dialogical notes assignment was created as one of the class requirements for the pre-service teachers to complete with their

elementary students during the practicum. The assignment served as a tool for the pre-service teachers to communicate dialogically and socially with their elementary students at a deeper level.

Analysis of Dialogical Notes and Reflections

The purpose of analyzing the dialogical notes and reflections is to answer the first research question put forth at the beginning of this article: what did the pre-service teachers know about their students through the dialogical notes? In addition, the analysis is also closely related to the second research question: how did the pre-service teachers use the information they learned from the dialogical notes to inform their teaching? In this section, I will focus on addressing the first research question and present the themes/patterns that emerged from the dialogical notes and reflections about what the pre-service teachers had learned about their students.

Again, a total of 43 pre-service teachers participated in this study. Therefore, there were 43 sets of dialogical notes completed by the pre-service teachers and the elementary students with whom they worked. In addition, each pre-service teacher and elementary student also wrote a reflection on this writing experience. Instead of imposing an a priori set of theoretical categories on the data, the notes and reflections were coded and analyzed to see whether or not certain themes or patterns emerged through the hermeneutic reconstructive analysis, which “reconstructs, into explicit discourse, cultural and subjective factors that are largely tacit in nature” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 93). The analytical coding process focuses on the internal connection between meanings instead of the external correlation between variables. Carspecken (1996) explains the hermeneutic reconstructive analysis in detail as follows:

The basic process involved in human understanding is hermeneutic, and hermeneutic processes involve a movement from initial holistic modes of understanding toward more explicit and delineated modes of understanding, which, in turn, modify one’s holistic grasp of meaning. A circular process is involved: movement from the tacit (intuitive and undifferentiated) toward the explicit (delineated and differentiated) and then back to the holistic. (p. 95)

Another way to conceptualize the circular process characteristic of the hermeneutic reconstructive analysis, or what Crotty (2003) calls “the hermeneutic circle,” is to think of it as “understanding the whole through grasping its parts, and comprehending the meaning of parts through divining the whole” (p. 92).

Thus, I began the data analysis by reading through all the notes and reflections, noting possible underlying meanings (i.e., a holistic understanding). Several such readings would begin to suggest patterns or themes that might be important to the analysis. Then selections of notes and reflections representative of the patterns or themes were analyzed for explicit meaning reconstructions (i.e., an explicit understanding of parts). The analysis of the selected notes and reflections, in turn, was used to confirm or modify the initial understanding grasped holistically. This circular whole-part-whole process was repeated until the holistic understanding of all the notes and reflections was aligned with the understanding derived from the explicit reconstructive analysis of parts of the notes and reflections. As a result of the hermeneutic reconstructive analysis, eight themes emerged from the data:

- having a better understanding of students
- forming a bond through writing notes

- using multiple forms of literacy
- motivating reluctant writers to write
- wanting to write more
- learning to write through writing
- learning from students
- planning to take up dialogical writing in their own classrooms

In what follows, I will discuss and give examples of each theme. The discussion is intended to answer the first research question: what did the pre-service teachers know about their students through the dialogical notes?

Having a Better Understanding of Students

Through note writing, many pre-service teachers said that they understood their students better. Some of the pre-service teachers found out their students' favorite colors, food, sports, games, animals, and so on. For example, one pre-service teacher said in her reflection that her student, Maraya (pseudonyms are used for pre-service teachers and their students throughout this article), wrote about basketball in all of her notes:

By writing to Maraya I found out I was able to learn more about her life than our brief talks. I found that her major discourse was about basketball. Basketball in her family is a big deal and especially for her. In all of my notes to her they involved basketball. I later came to the conclusion that she felt that basketball makes people famous and she would love to be famous. (Kathy)

In addition, many elementary students opened up and were willing to share with the pre-service teachers the information about their families such as their parents, grandparents, and other people with whom they lived. Here is a note from a third grader, Adam, talking about his family, "I have two brothers two bogs [dogs] I live with my dad." Similarly, another third grader wrote about his family:

I have a baby brother his name is Solomon he laughs sometime's my sister is 6 years old, My brother step is 3 years old. And CJ is 5 years old. How old are you? bo you like lemones?" (Eric)

One of the pre-service teachers learned to focus his notes on what the elementary student was interested in and kept the writing going. In their notes below, they talked about the movie character "Batman" and video games the kindergartener, Chris, brought up in his note. Chris wrote, "aer [Are] you Batman. on easter I playd lazer tag wit [with] my brazer [brother]. and I playd super Mario wold for super NiNtendow." In response, the pre-service teacher wrote:

Dear Chris,

I'm not Batman. I'm sorry to hear you had a cold during Easter. I had a good Easter with my family. I play some video games, too, and some games at the table, too. I ate A LOT of food. I had some good pie. I love pie. I think I'm going to bring in some Batman dice soon to help us make a book. Does that sound cool?

Sincerely,

Mr. Ford

Lane (1993) argues that we need to discover that writing is not something a teacher tells us to do, but something real and as much a part of us as anything we have ever said and done. Lane's insight about writing is echoed by the examples presented above where the elementary students talked about what they liked/did, who they were, and things that happened in their daily lives. In this sense, writing dialogical notes is parallel to what Carspecken (1999, 2003) refers to as a communicative action orientated toward understanding others and being understood. The dialogical notes serve as a medium for the writers to understand, and to be understood by, each other. Through this mutual understanding, the teachers learn to better teach their students while the students learn to write better. Both parties are motivated to write because writing is not an end, but a means to recognize, and to be recognized by, the other party. For example, when the elementary students were willing to talk about themselves, their families, and their interests in their notes, they no longer regarded writing as a meaningless assignment, but as a communicative action to express themselves and to be recognized as unique individuals. In this way, the dialogical notes help teachers and students open up or "get naked" (Orfanella, 1996, p. 53) and allow the teachers to glean information about their students to inform their teaching.

Forming a Bond through Writing Notes

A total of eight pre-service teachers wrote in their reflections that they formed a bond with their students through writing the notes. In his reflection, one pre-service teacher stated:

I was floored at how enjoyable I found this writing project to be. I really feel like I formed a great bond with my child, Chris, I wouldn't have otherwise. Surprisingly, it wasn't a bond formed by the content of put notes, but rather the fact we had our own secret connection just between the two of us. Being in a multi child family and in a classroom of 25, Chris probably doesn't get as much 1 on 1 attention as he would like, and I believe this project helped fill that void. (Ford)

Similarly, another pre-service teacher, Laurie, said in her reflection, "I feel like this assignment allowed for me and the child to form a bond and we have a better understanding of each other." The relationships the pre-service teachers formed with their writing partners were so close that one of the elementary students even said in her note, "You are like a Mom to me. I love you! I do not want to stop loveing you" (Natilea). Another first grader, Katie, also expressed a similar feeling in her note, "I love Miss Judy so bad that she loves me and Just like my Mom." In parallel, Eric, a third grader, regarded his pre-service teacher as a role model and wanted to go to the same university as his pre-service teacher did. Eric wrote, "I have something to tell you I really want to be in the [name of the university] but I have to wait How long will it take me?"

The examples above show that, through note writing, the pre-service teachers and their students knew each other better and formed a bond that went beyond the traditional relationship

between a teacher and a student. It was a kind of friendship that helped them connect to each other. This reformulated relationship allows students to communicate authentically in writing and is conducive to the teaching and learning of writing. It is in contrast to the traditional mode of writing instruction where the teacher plays the role of an authority, “policing student papers for mistakes” (Ballenger, 2013, p. 74).

Using Multiple Forms of Literacy

Although the elementary students were encouraged to complete the notes in writing, they were allowed to use alternative forms of literacy such as drawings. Therefore, some students chose to draw pictures in their notes and explained their pictures to the pre-service teachers. Some students began with drawing pictures and then added writing. Some students both wrote and drew pictures in their notes. A second grader even chose to verbally communicate some of his thoughts to his pre-service teacher, Petty, instead of writing notes. In her reflection, Petty noted, “... he often would verbally tell me his response to my dialogical notes rather than write it down. He bragged to me how well he could write but would never take the time to put his words on paper.”

The pre-service teachers allowed their students to use alternative forms of literacy such as drawing and verbally communicating in addition to writing because they had read about the importance of embracing multiple forms of literacy (Lee, 2011) as well as multiple ways of knowing (Leland, Harste, & Helt, 2000) in my class. These two articles argue that literacy should be regarded as multiple social practices rather than academic skills such as reading and writing only and that schools should allow students to demonstrate their understanding through multiple ways of knowing such as art, music, drama, movements, and so forth. Allowing their students to express their ideas in more than one form of literacy, the pre-service teachers demonstrated their understanding of these two articles and put their understanding into practice. An example of how the concept of multiple forms of literacy was put into practice in note writing is given below from Petty’s reflection:

This experience was meaningful because it really highlighted the notion of multiple literacies. Rather than writing, Dennis might have communicated with me better had there been a different medium he could have used. For example, when replying to my notes, he often reenacted his story. In his first response, he wrote down what his favorite movie was, but he reenacted some of his favorite scenes.

Motivating Reluctant Writers to Write

Eight pre-service teachers reported in their reflections that they were assigned by their classroom teachers to work with students who did not like, or were not capable of, writing. Among the eight students, three were special needs students. Yet these so-called “reluctant” or “at-risk” writers turned out to enjoy writing notes with their pre-service teachers. For example, Kaily’s classroom teacher did not believe that she liked writing. Yet Lora, the pre-service teacher with whom Kaily wrote, reported in her reflection how Kaily “blossomed into a writer after she was allowed to ‘write badly’” (Ballenger, 2013). Specifically, after Kaily was told that she did not have to worry about her spelling, but focused on ideas, she began to open up and wrote about her family in the notes. Below is an excerpt of Lora’s reflection about her writing experience with Kaily:

Throughout this semester, I was corresponding with a third-grade girl named Kaily. She is nine years old and African American. She attends the bilingual school of Linden

Elementary [a pseudonym]. As I began writing with Kaily, I had prior knowledge that she was not very good at spelling, so it was the teacher's belief that she did not like to write. In our notes, Kaily shared with me that she loves reading and writing, and she seemed to light up when writing about her family and activities that she likes to write. One thing that piqued my interest almost immediately was that Kaily did not seem sure of her wording, as though she was afraid I would judge her poorly if she said something in an incorrect way or without formal English. I tried to incorporate the idea of "writing badly" like we had discussed in class, allowing her to talk about comforting subjects: her family, her dog, her favorite games and activities, etc. I was thrilled to see that she began using more of her home language in her responses. She slowly began to open up, talking about her experiences and adventures with her step-brother and sister, and telling me more about her own interests, although she was still fairly vague. I am curious as to how her writing would continue to develop if she began corresponding freely in a journal with her teacher or with a pen pal outside of school.

Likewise, Christy, another pre-service teacher working with David, a special needs student, told him not to worry about his spelling. This motivated David to write more than he would have done otherwise. Christy reflected on her writing experience as follows:

This was a different and wonderful experience. I witnessed how a child enjoys way more writing about things they are passionate about. At first David would ask me if he was spelling the words correctly. I had to let him know how I wasn't grading his spelling and I just wanted him to have freedom with this. I made sure he felt unjudged.

In parallel with Christy's comment about David, David's reflection about note writing was positive as well, "I liked writing back and forth. I dont like writing letters but this was fun becuse I got to writ my favorite thing's to do."

One common motivator present among these "reluctant" writers was that they were trusted as writers and told not to worry about grammar/spelling, but to focus on what they knew, were interested in, or were capable of. This is a paradigm shift from the traditional deficit-based instruction where we identify what students "cannot" do and try to remedy it. In deficit-based instruction, students are positioned as "receivers (and victims) of knowledge, not creators" (Campano, 2008, p. 145). Instead, the pre-service teachers focused on what their students could do and encouraged them to write about it. Once the students believed themselves as writers and were assured that people were interested in their writing, they began to tell their stories through writing.

Wanting to Write More

For this assignment, the pre-service teachers and their students each were asked to complete only five notes and one reflection. However, many of them said in their reflections that they enjoyed writing the notes so much that they wrote more than what they were required to do. For example, one pre-service teacher wrote in her reflection:

Even though we had finished our five entries to each other she had asked if we could still write to each other until I leave. I of course said yes and was very pleased to hear that she wanted to continue writing. (Judy)

Similarly, another pre-service said in her reflection that her student could hardly wait to read her notes and write back to her.

Every Wednesday when I would walk into her classroom and set down my things, she would immediately run over to me and give me a hug and grab our journal. She could not wait to read what I wrote and to write back. (Alexis)

Because the pre-service teacher worked one-on-one with his/her elementary student during the practicum, this meant that only one student in a classroom had the opportunity to write notes with the pre-service teacher. Two pre-service teachers said in their reflections that other students in the classrooms who did not get a chance to write with them considered writing notes a “privilege” rather than a boring assignment. Ford, one of the pre-service teachers, noted, “One thing I found interesting was how jealous some of the other children got, and how much Chris seemed to bask in that jealousy, sometimes referring to our letters as ‘top secret awesome notes’ to other children.” Erin also talked about how other students wanted to write with her:

From this assignment, I also learned that children love to write to me not just Allen. Every time I would write him back, a new student would come up to me and ask if they could be my pen pal too. I thought this was the greatest thing so I gave journals to the other students too so that they could write me. This way they could feel inspired to write without being prompted of what to say. With the students interested in writing, I want them to continue to write to each other after I am gone as long as it is outside of school to influence more writing and friendship.

The elementary students’ enjoyment of writing notes brought up in the pre-service teachers’ reflections above was a result of writing acquired as a social practice in a safe environment. Specifically, writing as a social practice is meant to understand and form a relationship with people, but not to be judged by what and how we write. Writing should be an avenue through which we can explore ourselves as well as the world around us. In this sense, writing is an act of risk taking. In fact, Orfanella (1996) compares sharing writing in English class metaphorically to showering together after gym class. He argues that asking students to share their writing is like sharing “their feelings and vulnerabilities, and their innermost thoughts” (Orfanella, 1996, p. 53). This is especially true when the power relationship between teachers and students is not equalized, but usually tilted in favor of the former. Because teachers are given power to grade students’ work, students tend to write to please their teachers in order to receive good grades. Therefore, teaching writing is not simply teaching neutral knowledge of using words, grammar, and literary techniques, but creating a learning environment where students feel safe to take risks.

Learning to Write through Writing

Though writing notes with students did not involve formal instruction of writing as in a traditional classroom, several pre-service teachers reported that their students learned to write better through writing notes with them. Their students learned to improve writing in different ways. For example, one of the pre-service teachers, Breanna, wrote in her reflection:

She [the elementary student] did not respond to me very much and only gave responses to my questions. The more we wrote, the more she wrote. At the beginning, she did not use an introduction or sign the notes, but as I kept doing it, she eventually started doing it. It wasn't something I made her do. She did it on her own.

Breanna's student was able to learn how to write not through formal writing instruction, but by looking at Breanna's notes as examples and imitating what she did. Actually, Breanna was not alone in seeing her student improve writing through writing with her. Another pre-service teacher, Judy, reported a similar experience in her reflection:

When I wrote my first note to her I wanted to not only know more about her but also what she knows when it comes to writing letters. After her first letter I realized that she had not included a Dear Miss Judy, date or closing. I wanted to wait and see if Katie would recognize what I was doing with my letter and follow that format also. With her being in first grade I was curious if she would recognize none of them, some or all. Katie's third writing ended with her saying, Your Friend Katie Smith. Even though she hadn't included the date and introduction I was so proud of her for noticing I closed my letter with a Your Friend, and that she should too. When I had told her how proud I was of her for doing that she had the biggest smile on her face and you could tell she was proud too.

Alexis also provided a detailed description in her reflection about the progress her student made in writing through this writing experience:

Natilea's writing ability benefited through this process. When we first started writing to each other I encouraged her to keep writing and to write more (her classroom teacher's request). Now at the end of this experience she writes two to three times as much with no prompting at all. She's proud of how much she can write. After writing her last note she proudly told me that she had written more than me. Also, the quality of Natilea's entries has also improved. At the beginning of our note writing she would answer the questions I asked in one sentence simple answers like "I like...." She has begun elaborating and going into more detail. She also writes now without hesitation. When we first started writing to each other she would come and ask me how to spell words multiple times while writing a note. Once she understood that this was not being graded on spelling and that ideas were all that mattered she quit asking and began writing freely.

The above examples are consistent with my finding reported in another study. Specifically, students are not "taught," but 'socialized' to the writing Discourse. This is because a Discourse, which consists of all the beliefs, values, actions, etc. socially accepted in a group, is acquired through socialization" (Lee & Lee, 2015, p. 19). In school, writing is usually taught in a skill-based approach that focuses on parts (usually decontextualized parts) of writing such as spelling, vocabulary, grammar, etc. In contrast, writing through socialization is concerned with holistic ideas within sociocultural context as the pre-service teachers did with their students.

Learning from Students

Just as the elementary students learned from the pre-service teachers, so did the pre-service teachers learn from their students. For example, Melinda learned to adapt her writing to align with her student's level:

At the beginning I overestimated Zoey's (a kindergartener) reading and writing skills. I wrote a long letter and asked several questions. When she did not respond to any of my questions in her letter, I had to change the way that I wrote mine. I learned how to adapt to her ability level and her preferred form of literacy. I could tell that she liked to draw pictures, so that is what I asked her to do. I noticed that she actually responded to my questions when I only asked one and asked her to draw a picture. She went into a lot more detail on some of her pictures than she really had to which I think shows that she was enjoying the experience and wanted to do a good job even though she was not getting a grade on it.

Unlike Melinda, Caitlyn was skeptical about her student's writing ability, but changed her misconception that "kindergarteners can't write."

I was very skeptical about this assignment at first because I was assigned in a kindergarten classroom but my views changed dramatically after writing with Natalie.... Natalie has opened my eyes and completely eliminated my thinking on "kindergarteners can't write" or "kindergarteners have trouble with their writing." I was completely blown away and infatuated when Natalie first wrote to me saying she wanted to be a dentist when growing up. I mean she is a 6-year-old and has the mind and passion of a high school student. When I was Natalie's age, my dream was being a princess or going to the moon or becoming a mermaid. I feel like we completely underestimate the minds of our youth. And not only would Natalie write to me, she would create a picture that connected to her story.

The examples above remind us as educators again not to impose on students a teacher-centered curriculum, i.e., one based on our speculation about what our students can/cannot do or on our memory about how we were taught in the past. Instead, the curriculum should be created bottom-up based on what Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) refer to as students' personal and cultural resources such as "personal experience; social issues books; popular culture and media; home literacies; textbooks; oral texts; competence in a language other than English; student desires and interests; and community, national, and international issues" (pp. 5-7). Therefore, to teach students to write begins with an understanding of what they want to, and are able to, write about.

Planning to Take up Dialogical Writing in Their Own Classrooms

Having seen the benefits of writing with students, many pre-service teachers said that they would like to do it in their own classrooms in the future. For example, one of the pre-service teachers said, "I have grown from this experience as a pre-service teacher and hope to possibly incorporate this project in my own classroom someday." Similarly, Nicholas ended his reflection with, "This will be an activity that I plan on implementing in my own classroom." In addition to planning on doing this project in his own classroom, Ford hoped that his wife could do it to better connect with their son:

Overall, I definitely plan on having my wife do this in the future with our son. I'm very close to him and I think this would be a fantastic way for her to connect a little better with him. I also think this would be a fantastic activity to do in my future classroom with all the kids individually as I could really get to know them and their home life better. I feel like this project taught me the value of one on one communication with children and how beneficial that can potentially be in forming a connection with my children in the classroom, and at the same time a fantastic literacy exercise.

This writing experience opened the pre-service teachers' eyes and even changed their concept about teaching writing. The pre-service teachers' endorsement of dialogical notes provided an answer to the central inquiry of this section – the first research question: what did the pre-service teachers know about their students through the dialogical notes? Through note writing, the pre-service teachers knew their students better (including their favorite sports, games, activities, family members...); formed a bond with their students; learned how to motivate their students to write by allowing them to use the forms of literacy they felt comfortable with; knew how to help reluctant writers to write by focusing on their strengths instead of weaknesses; witnessed that their students were able to learn to write through writing; and learned how to teach writing through writing with students. In addition, the pre-service teachers exhibited a strong interest in implementing dialogical notes in their future classrooms. Given all the things the preservice teachers learned about their students through the notes, were they able to put what they knew into practice? This question is actually what the second research question is concerned with and will be addressed in the following section.

Teaching through Writing

Now let us look at the second research question: how did the pre-service teachers use the information they learned from the dialogical notes to inform their teaching? In what follows, I will divide my response to this question into two parts: (a) learning to teach through writing dialogical notes and (b) building teaching on dialogical notes.

Learning to Teach through Writing Dialogical Notes

The discussion of learning to teaching through writing dialogical notes emphasizes what the pre-service teachers learned about teaching writing “during” the process of writing notes with their students. The dialogical notes were used not only as a tool for the pre-service teachers to know their students, but also as an avenue for them to teach writing in a way not typical of the writing instruction received in a traditional classroom. In other words, writing notes with students was actually a mutual learning process for the students and the pre-service teachers. The students learned to write from seeing what and how the pre-service teachers wrote in the notes. Likewise, the pre-service teachers learned to teach writing from being attentive to what and how their students wrote in the notes. Some pre-service teachers wrote about topics in which their students were interested to encourage more writing. Some motivated their students to write by telling them not to worry about spelling and grammar, but to focus on ideas. Some allowed their students to use multiple forms of literacy, such as writing, drawing, and speaking, to freely express their thoughts. Some adapted their writing to the level of their students to keep them engaged and interested in writing.

The analysis of the dialogical notes and reflections shows that the pre-service teachers learned to teach writing through the very act of writing with their students. This learning is

different from the information they received from listening to lectures in class or the knowledge they gained from reading textbooks. Instead, the pre-service teachers analyzed their students' dialogical notes and used the information they learned from the notes to motivate their students to write. In this way, the pre-service teachers did not only write, but also improved their teaching of writing through writing with their students.

Building Teaching on Dialogical Notes

Another thing the pre-service teachers learned from the dialogical notes was related to their lesson planning. Specifically, the pre-service teachers were required to use the information they gleaned from the dialogical notes to create lesson plans. In what follows, I will present a lesson plan created by Jane based on her knowledge of the student through note writing. The presentation will focus on how the lesson plan relates to the dialogical notes instead of providing all the details about the lesson plan. In the excerpt of her lesson plan below, Jane discussed the connection between the lesson plan and her student:

Miranda is a little girl who just recently turned 9. She is in the 3rd grade, and she culturally identifies as white. Her school is comprised of a majority white population. She lives within the city limits of South Whitley, Indiana. There, she lives in an apartment complex with her mother, her mother's boyfriend, and a roommate of the house. Her father is not a part of Miranda's life. She is diagnosed with bipolar disorder, which inhibits her from maintaining positive peer relationships. She has few friends, and does not handle stressful situations well. In any conflict, Miranda has to be the correct one, and she can never be wrong. She is quick to get angry with her peers, and her verbal language is often defensive or heavily toned with aggression. This is why most of the children in her class avoid her. However, she cares very much about what people think of her. She is often chosen last when the class is allowed to choose partners, which is reflected in her self-esteem. Bipolar disorder also causes her to have trouble staying interested in material. When there is a lack of interest in the material, Miranda struggles to pay attention and her motivation decreases. She is driven solely on intrinsic motivation. She does what she wants to do, and nothing more. This often causes her to fall behind, which is reflected in her writing. She worries that she is not a good writer, so making the assignment less formal would benefit her greatly. This was apparent in our dialogical notes. She responded to writing much better in an informal exercise. When given a prompt from an instructor, Miranda typically disengages, and does not complete the assignment. However, if she is interested in the material Miranda shows much enthusiasm. Miranda is very passionate about Shopkins [small, collectable toys, manufactured by Moose Toys, based on grocery store items, each of which has a face and unique name], which is why I chose them as the center of this lesson plan. By using a concept that she is enthusiastic about, I believe that it will help her engage in the assignment, as well as respond to a writing assignment which she would usually ignore. I also hope to use the issue of confrontation in the assignment to help Miranda work out some conflict resolution strategies, which would help her maintain more positive peer relationships.

The following activities were designed by Jane to tap into Miranda's interest in Shopkins and to help her understand and foster positive peer relationships:

In pairs, I would give Miranda and her teacher chosen partner (so she is not chosen last) a pencil, paper, and two Shopkins. In this case the two Shopkins are a toaster and a shampoo. I would then ask Miranda a prompt question, “What is a conflict your two characters might have? (Example: How can Toaster and Shampoo get along better when Toaster doesn’t think Shampoo is a good soap?) Why do you think toaster feels this way? How do you think this makes Shampoo feel? If you were them, how would you solve their problem? How could you get them to get along?” Working with her partner, Miranda and the other student would write out dialogue between the two characters. This dialogue would include four components:

1. What is the conflict they have?
2. What are the two perspectives of the conflict?
3. How are they going to resolve this conflict?
4. What actions are they going to take to prevent any further conflict?

The writing does not have to be perfect, and there is no penalty for incorrect spelling or grammar. There is no minimum page requirement. I just need them to get their ideas on paper. Once Miranda and her partner are finished with their script, they will perform their dialogue of the two characters for the class. If they have the time, they are welcome to prepare a set for the script, but it is not required.

In this lesson plan, Jane had two main objectives to accomplish. She wanted to help Miranda improve her relationship with peers, on the one hand, and her writing skills, on the other hand. Jane learned from the notes that Miranda was more likely to write about things she was passionate about, e.g., Shopkins, and that she preferred to write in a less formal setting. Therefore, Jane cleverly designed a lesson plan geared toward these two objectives through the use of Shopkins. Jane’s lesson plan is singled out for discussion because it was characteristic of the other lesson plans designed by the pre-service teachers in the sense that it was created bottom-up based on a student’s interest and need. In other words, all the pre-service teachers were able to come up with lesson plans that were built on what they had learned about their students from the dialogical notes though their students’ interests (e.g., Shopkins, Batman, basketball, etc.) might vary from person to person.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, I explained the importance of building teaching on students’ prior knowledge. To explore how my class assignment, dialogical notes, could help access students’ prior knowledge, I formulated two research questions: (a) what did the pre-service teachers know about their students through the dialogical notes? and (b) how did the pre-service teachers use the information they learned from the dialogical notes to inform their teaching? Then examples of dialogical notes and reflections written by the pre-service teachers and their students were given to address these two research questions. I showed that dialogical notes served as a viable way for the pre-service teachers to know their students and teach them accordingly.

It is important to note that I am not arguing that if we use dialogical notes, we will automatically become good teachers. Dialogical notes, indeed, help us better understand our students. They inform us of how our students feel, what they like or dislike, what they do, and with whom they associate in school and at home, etc. Through note writing, we also learn if our students

are good writers or struggle with writing. Such information can be gleaned from the dialogical notes, but the information itself is not sufficient to make us good teachers. It is “how” we use the information that will help us improve our teaching. For example, after we know our students’ interests from their notes, we can do nothing or try to incorporate what they are interested in into our curriculum to engage them. Likewise, when writing with struggling or reluctant writers, we can choose to focus on their mechanical mistakes or tell them that their ideas are more important than writing perfectly. Therefore, it is not only “what” we know about our students from the dialogical notes (which is tied to the first research question), but also “how” we use the information we have learned from the dialogical notes (which is tied to the second research question) that makes a difference in our teaching.

Notes

1. Dialogical notes are letters/journals written by pre-service teachers and their elementary students. The letters/journals do not have to be formal with a date, salutation, signatory, etc., but can be as informal as personal notes. The notes are dialogical in nature because they are written back and forth or dialogically between the pre-service teacher and his/her elementary student. The purpose of writing the notes is to help the pre-service teachers have a better understanding of their elementary students. More details about dialogical notes will be provided later in this article.

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Readers' Interactions in an Online Reading Group

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Abstract

This study is an investigation of readers' posts to an online forum devoted to the discussion of short stories and poems. The ELT Online Reading Group (ORG) – an electronic version of a face-to-face reading circle – aimed at promoting the development of reading skills and the reading and discussion of literature among teachers, trainee teachers and other professionals in the field of English language teaching (ELT). This paper focuses on the multi-layered relationships between readers in the group by looking at some of the distinctive features of participants' posts. Results suggest that there is a dialogical orientation in the communicative strategies participants employed in the forum and that those are similar to the ones observed in face-to-face reading groups. The internal 'stratification of discourse' and the 'diversity of social speech types' that Bakhtin (1981: 262) argues are present in the Novel have also been observed in the forum posts. The findings of this study may be relevant to an assessment of the viability and usefulness of establishing online reading groups as tools to promote the development of members' reading skills, the creation of communities of readers, and a re-evaluation of the role of literature in language teacher education.

Keywords

Dialogue; Discourse Analysis; Literature; Reading; Online Interaction

Introduction

This paper reports on a study conducted on an online reading group for teachers, trainee teachers and other professionals in the field of English language teaching (ELT). The Online Reading Group (ORG) was hosted on the British Council website TeachingEnglish and active between 2007 and 2014. The data for this study was collected between 2010 and 2013. The study consisted of an investigation of readers' responses to literary texts and their comments on such texts posted to a dedicated online discussion forum. This paper discusses the extent to which participants' posts to the forum related to the group interaction and which compositional features in such written comments indicate these relationships.

The development of interactive technologies at the end of the 20th century and their considerable expansion in the 21st century has made it possible for people living in diverse places and time zones to get together and exchange information and ideas via social media and online interactive channels. These new possibilities have been recognized by people interested in reading and discussing the books they read with other readers without the temporal and spatial limitations inherent to face-to-face reading groups. An online search conducted on "reading groups" on Google in May 2016 generated 'about 216,000,000 results' while a new search in early February 2017 produced 'about 408,000,000 results'. The vast majority of these reading groups are hosted by mainstream media, including newspapers and publishers, as well as various other organizations. They are often linked to the home pages of such companies and organizations even though their commercial associations and affiliations may not be immediately obvious thus suggesting complex relationships between publishers, social networks, and readers (Sedo et al., 2011). In spite of their growing numbers and Internet presence, such reading groups are mainly designed for readers who have access to physical copies of books in their lists of recommended reading, either by acquiring them or borrowing

them from local libraries. Moreover, as a rule, they do not explicitly target non-native speakers of English who largely do not have access to printed versions of texts, as it was the case with the members of the online reading group investigated in this study.

This investigation was based on the notion that the meanings attributed to the texts read, produced, and discussed in the research setting were partially the result of the complex relationships between those texts and the myriad of other reading and life experiences readers brought with them. In this paper, I argue that the internal dialogue that Bakhtin (1981) sees as the main characteristic of the Novel as a literary genre is also present in the dialogue among literature readers in the ORG forum. At surface level, this dialogue is visible in the interactive strategies participants employ, such as greeting, naming, posing questions, giving answers and openly agreeing or disagreeing with something that had been previously said by another poster. At a deeper level, dialogic interaction is found in the posters' drive towards what others have said, such as borrowing ideas from other posters and engaging in an unfolding exchange about other participants' ideas for a string of comments.

Face-to-Face and Online Reading Groups

The first organized reading societies appeared in England in the eighteenth century with members meeting face-to-face to discuss their reading (Hartley, 2002: 18). Since then, groups of readers, variously called reading groups, reading circles and book clubs, have spread around the world and have eventually reached the cyberspace. Reading groups could be simply defined as groups of people who regularly, or irregularly, meet to discuss the books they read. One of the very first studies on reading groups in the UK was conducted at the beginning of the 21st century by Hartley (2002) whose survey disclosed a wide variety among reading groups in terms of composition, objectives, mode of interaction, reading selection, frequency of meeting, patterns of participation and whole group dynamics. Despite such diversity, Hartley emphasizes that the social interactive aspect is shared by almost all groups surveyed since 'a reading group isn't just about reading; it is about reading in a context, a context which is fostered by the group, and which in turn affects the whole experience of reading' (p.22). Commenting on Hartley's early work, Sedo (2011: 9) recognizes that the publication 'provides useful background for an understanding of the cultural, social and educational roles of book clubs', but argues that it ignored human complexities and the complexities of the relationships between books and readers.

Sedo (2003) conducted her own survey on reading groups collecting data mainly among Canadian and American readers. Her research, besides focusing on the gendered aspect of membership, considered the influence of the Internet on book clubs, as well as the differences and similarities between face-to-face and online reading groups. She concluded that for both kinds of groups 'the popularity of book clubs lies in the idea that people want to regain a sense of community and that sharing ideas about books is one way to do that' (Sedo, 2003: 85). Although Swann and Allington (2009: 247) intended to investigate both face-to-face and online reading groups, their research was eventually limited to a face-to-face reading group in Scotland. Their study aimed to 'provide an example of how "ordinary readers" (...) interpret and evaluate literary texts'. They drew on sociolinguistics to provide an analysis of spoken interactions in the reading group under investigation and concluded that 'where participants appear to make reference to their subjective responses to texts, this often has the function of presenting evaluations of those texts in mitigated form.' They observed that in the discussion of texts, participants directly invoke their own and others' knowledge and past experiences and identified 'a significant amount of co-construction in which interpretations' were 'collaboratively developed' (p.262).

Despite the similarities between face-to-face and online reading groups, the environment in which exchanges occurred in the ORG was considerably different from most

research settings mentioned above since the overwhelming majority of group members had little or no offline contact with each other. Granting that there are considerable differences among various face-to-face reading groups, some of the aspects that were regularly observed by Hartley (2002) in her seminal study can still serve as a point of reference for the analysis of the similarities and differences between face-to-face reading groups and the ORG (Table 1).

Table 1

Some Similarities and Differences Between Face-to-Face Reading Groups and the ORG

	Hartley, 2002	This study
Membership	Usually linked to local, small communities; quite regular number of members; members usually belong to different professional groups; diverse cultural backgrounds; most adult groups with a high number of female participants.	Worldwide community; open, fluctuating membership; members belong to one professional group; diverse cultural backgrounds, no specific information on participants' gender.
Interaction	Usually pre-determined, regular, scheduled meetings; predominantly face-to-face contact and interaction; mostly oral communication; typically immediate response to other members' comments; the discussion is accessible only to group participants and, potentially, those in contact with them.	Flexible, unrestricted, and unscheduled access to the discussion; predominantly, and often exclusively, online contact and interaction; text-based communication; mostly delayed response to other members' comments; the discussion is accessible to any individual visiting the Group as long as the website remains live.
Reading	Texts available as hardcopies; texts usually selected by group members; wide range of criteria for text selection; typically all members read the same text for a given period.	Texts available as electronic copies; texts mostly selected by the Group coordinator; choice of text strictly subject to copyright restrictions according to the UK laws and regulations; members may be reading different texts available on the website in a given period.
Reader-response	Mostly oral commentary; personal and ethically oriented responses to texts; comparisons to other books read together. <i>No data regarding the use of quotes or other linguistic and compositional features observed in the texts read in participants' comments and discussions.</i>	Predominantly written commentary; personal and ethically oriented responses to texts; frequent intertextual references; presence of other linguistic and compositional features observed in the text; frequent use of quotes; creative writing output triggered by texts discussed in the Group.

Some more recent studies on online readers' include Lima and Lamy (2013) discussion of the social and professional development interactions taking place in the same online reading group that is the subject of this paper. Curdwood (2013) also focus on reading on social media but his investigation consists of a single case study of a 13-year-old boy and his 'literacy practices across modes, texts, and contexts associated with *The Hunger Games* trilogy'; while Vlieghe et al. (2015: 25) observed 'literary practices within social media environments' on the website and a Facebook group established by the Flemish government aimed at promoting the reading of literature. Yet, despite recent investigations, there is still a considerable gap in published academic research on online reading groups. One of the main contributions of this study to the field is that the unique nature of ORG provided a research setting where it was possible to examine online interactions among readers who chiefly depend on the Internet as their means of contact and as the main source of reading material.

The Educational Roles of Reading Groups

The potential for learning that reading groups offer was early recognized by educators who started using face-to-face reading groups in diverse educational contexts both in schools and in further education for the development of literacy, reading strategies, critical reading, literary reading, and for a plethora of other educational purposes (Daniels, 2002; Hartley, 2002; McMahon & Raphael, 1997). For example, Cumming-Potvin (2007) conducted a case study with a grade-7 boy in Australia to investigate the role of scaffolding in literature circles to facilitate the development of critical reading skills, whereas Duncan (2009) explored the roles of reading circles to advance adult reading in formal adult education in London. Peplow (2011) used conversation analysis and the concept of communities of practice to analyse the face to-face group interactions in a book club in south-east England in 2009. Levy (2011) looked into the connections between literature reading circles, developmental reading and basic writing in classrooms in a community college in New York, while Sanacore (2013: 117) reflected on how literature circles could be used 'as a vehicle for nurturing personal and critical responses to text'. More recently, Hyder (2016) investigated reading groups in public libraries and how they have expanded to include a wide range of groups, such as visually impaired readers, in order to promote social inclusion.

Reading groups have also been used in English language teaching to promote extensive reading in foreign and second language acquisition and recent research in the field tends to support the claim that participating in reading groups can be beneficial to language learners in a number of aspects. For example, working with Vietnamese learners Shelton-Strong (2012: 222) argues that, as long as appropriate scaffolding is provided, literature circles can 'foster learner autonomy, while providing opportunities for focused extensive reading and collaborative, purposeful discussion' and serve as 'platforms to promote collaborative and multidimensional learning'. Beglar et al. (2012) claim that Japanese university EFL students showed great gains in terms of reading rate and reading comprehension by taking part in pleasure reading groups. The concept of reading groups has also been explored by some ELT publishers (Macmillan, 2016; Oxford University Press, 2017) who support their creation as a way of exploring their Graded Readers series in classroom-based discussion groups. Much rarer is literature on reading groups among English language teachers. Working in Japan, Fenton-Smith and Stillwell, (2011) applied the concept of reading groups to explore how English language teachers engaged with ideas in texts; however, instead of literary texts, their reading group members discussed professional literature.

Reading Groups as Communities

Communities can be categorized and defined in different ways according to different criteria, such as the profession, interests and language their members share. In this sense the

ORG could be seen as a community since its members interact in a shared virtual space and have the common characteristics of being all connected to English language teaching and interested in literature. In his seminal work, Wenger (1998: 4–5) proposed the concept of *communities of practice* which is based on the assumption that learning is the result of active social participation in the ‘*practices* of the social communities’ that in turn leads to the construction of ‘*identities* in relation to these communities’ (emphasis in the original). Both practice and identity are key components of Wenger’s social theory of learning, along with meaning and community, all of which are ‘deeply interconnected and mutually defining’ (p.5). Wenger’s theory is that learning is an integral part of our lives and it occurs in the various communities to which we belong (p.8) ‘through our engagement in actions and interactions’ that are embedded ‘in culture and history’ (p.13). Learning is not seen as a separate activity but something that occurs at all times. It can be intensified at time when our familiarity with situations is shaken as problems and challenges are posed to us and force us to engage in new practices to be able to respond to them. Moreover, ‘even failing to learn what is expected in a given situation usually involves learning something else instead’ (Wenger, 1998: 8). Lave and Wenger (1991) call *situated learning* the learning happening in a particular context and social situation. Considering learning a response given to a particular problem in a certain context and situation is close to Bakhtin’s (1990) notions of answerability or responsiveness. For Bakhtin, life is an utterance, a response by someone in a certain time-space situation (chronotope) given to someone else in another time-space situation. There is no moment or place in life that is not a *situation*. Life is dialogical because we are naturally oriented towards a response. We cannot fail but answer to the other and to the world, even if we refuse to answer. That is why some form of learning always takes place when individuals interact with each other (Holquist, 2002: 153).

Communities have also been defined in linguistic terms. The fact that members of the ORG are all speakers of English, albeit with different levels of language proficiency, and possibly making some use of the ELT professional jargon, may lead to the question whether the ORG can be considered a speech community. Wardhaugh (2011: 118–134) traces the historical definitions of *speech community* and the difficulties of coming to a consensus on what it actually constitutes. Swales (1990: 24) argues that the concept of speech cannot be adopted as ‘an exclusive modifier for communities that are often heavily engaged in writing’ and, instead, advocates a distinction between socio-linguistic grouping and socio-rhetorical grouping based on their communicative needs and goals, group formation and forms of recruitment into the community. Swales’ taxonomy and principles have also been contested, alternative terminologies have been proposed, and further differentiation between groups and communities suggested (Zhu, 2005: 37). Linguists’ difficulties in producing encompassing definitions for speech and discourse genres and to account for individuals’ apparently inconsistent and multiple discourses inside a given community illustrate their ‘failure to acknowledge the actual possibility of specific genres coexisting’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 5) within a given body of discourse, which Bakhtin had already identified in his critique of the Poetics of the nineteenth century.

Developments on communication technology have brought the concept of communities to the cyberspace and there is no shortage of publications in the field of online learning communities. From the beginning of the century, researchers have examined a wide range of issues related to technology-based learning from the instructional, technical and collaborative point of view (Andreson & Elloumi, 2004; Lambropoulos & Zaphiris, 2007; Luppigini, 2007; Palloff & Pratt, 2007; Palloff & Pratt, 2010; Pozzi & Persico, 2010; Prestridge, 2010; Stephenson, 2001; Warschauer, 2002). There are also edited publications specifically connected to the setting of this study, such as England (2012) who focuses on online education

from a TESOL perspective and Lancashire (2009) who brings together a collection of case studies in language and literature online teaching.

A seminal work on the use of technology in language education was published by Lamy and Hampel (2007) where they compare and contrast two studies on online communities: one ‘inspired by Hallidayan text linguistics’ and, thus, positioned in the ‘more cognitive learning framework’ (p. 108); and another that investigates teachers’ collaborative use of technology from a constructivist point of view and is, therefore, positioned ‘within the more sociocultural of the learning frameworks’ (p. 110) but they concluded that research in the field of online interaction continued to miss ‘a theory of collaboration’ (p. 112).

In a report published by the European Commission, Aceto et al. (2010) analysed twelve different online learning communities, including one devoted to English language learning (pp. 59-64) and one created to facilitate the exchange of books among individuals mostly living in the US and Europe (pp. 69-72). According to the report, in spite of all the differences among them, in all analysed communities ‘members perceive that significant learning happens unintentionally (with very few exceptions) by means of interaction, knowledge and experience sharing, and material creation and/or sharing’ (p.6). Aceto et al (2010: 105) conclude that the usual definition of an online learning community as ‘a group of individuals who have a common learning goal’ fails to adequately describe the complex interactions (contextual, motivational, personal, behavioural, values) which ‘combine to create a satisfactory and effective learning experience’. Instead, they propose a definition of learning community as a group of ‘individuals who share common interests, aims, passions, objectives or circumstances’ and who ‘expand their level of understanding, awareness, knowledge, experience and horizons’ by engaging with other members in the group through electronic media.

In this study, I adopted Aceto et al.’s (2010) broad definition of online community based on the sharing of a common interest in literature instead of a goal oriented definition since survey data showed that participants’ objectives when joining the ORG tend to vary. I also propose employing Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogue and heteroglossia to fill in the theoretical gap Lamy and Hampel (2007) identified and, hence, explain how online community members collaborate and construct knowledge through language.

Research Methodology

Participants

Although the ORG membership consisted of over 1,400 members based in over 75 countries at the end point of the data collection (October 2013), research participants considered in this paper are only the members who posted in one or more of the 14 online discussion threads dedicated to the discussion on a single short story or poem. Analysis of the forum posts shows that posting was done mostly by a core of 23 long-term members and three new members that took up posting with enthusiasm, besides occasional contributions by various other participants.

Due to data protection restrictions imposed by the online host organization, it was not possible to establish the mother tongue of each group member or accurate information on members’ professional status. However, a survey sample of 126 ORG members, conducted between February and May 2012, shows that the majority of respondents were non-native speakers of English (89.69%) who were mostly ELT practitioners (73.8%) or teacher trainers (17.5%). The survey participants’ ELT history is much more heterogeneous; however, approximately one in four respondents reported having been working in the field for more than 20 years.

Data Collection and Analysis

From the 38 ORG active discussion threads (total of 1,611 posts), 14 threads on the discussion a single short story or poem were selected for analysis of the readers' forum interactions, with a total of 382 posts (Table 2). Threads were selected based on the following criteria: a) they contained a minimum of twenty replies each; b) they roughly corresponded to different periods in the ORG existence, thus adding a longitudinal dimension to the study; and c) they discussed texts written in different styles, by writers of different nationalities and from different literary periods, albeit still limited by online accessibility to texts and the UK legal copyrights constraints.

Table 2

Discussion Threads on Specific Literary Texts Used for Data Analysis

Thread	Title	Author	Opening date	Nº replies
T01	'Ullswater'	Romesh Gunsekera	August 2007	32
T02	'A House in the Country'	Romesh Gunsekera	September 2007	22
T03	'The Landing'	Anita Desai	March 2008	20
T04	'The Nightingale and the Rose'	Oscar Wilde	January 2009	53
T05	'The Verger'	Somerset Maugham	February 2009	32
T06	'The Story of an Hour'	Kate Chopin	November 2009	24
T07	'David Swan'	Nathaniel Hawthorne	January 2010	20
T08	'Michael'	William Wordsworth	May 2010	38
T09	'The Lady Of Shallot'	Alfred Lord Tennyson	July 2011	20
T10	'The Homecoming'	Rabindranath Tagore	February 2012	30
T11	'The Song of the Morrow'	Robert Louis Stevenson	March 2012	22
T12	'Goat'	Romesh Gunsekera	May 2012	27
T13	'Edward Mills and George Benton: A Tale'	Mark Twain	July 2012	22
T14	'The Parrot's Tale'	Rabindranath Tagore	August 2012	20
TOTAL				382

The first stage in the analysis was to look at the posts in relation to the literary texts on which they commented in order to identify discursive features present in, or showing some connection with, the reading source. However, in this paper, I focus on the second analytical stage when posts in the same thread were analysed in order to identify discursive features and interactive patterns between posters. As in face-to-face reading groups, the act of reading presupposes engaging in 'talking about' the text read since posters know that their comments are open to others' replies where their arguments can be reinforced and/or contested and where meaning may have to be negotiated. In this paper, I discuss three main patterns of relationships

among participants that were observed in the ORG forum: *use of direct quotes, interactions and adoptions*.

Although the analytical categories used are unique to this study, Hall's (2015: 157–230) comprehensive review of research done in the field of reading literature, with both native speakers of English and second language learners in different educational contexts, reveals that some of the categories adopted by other researchers bear some similarities with the ones employed here, albeit differing in the terminology adopted. The main differences between the vast majority of the studies Hall (2015) discusses and this investigation are: a) those are mostly controlled experiments in extensive reading, b) they tend to consider solely the relationships between texts and individual readers, without considering reader-reader interactions, and c) they tend to focus on linguistic features of readers' responses to texts.

Theoretical Framework

My choice of analytical approach was based on conceptual understandings strongly influenced by Bakhtin's (1981) views of the dynamic multiple relations between the self and others encapsulated in the concepts of dialogue and heteroglossia. However, there is not yet a single Bakhtinian approach with a set of specific analytical tools, such as the ones developed by conversation analysts or Foucauldian researchers. Therefore, researchers analysing discourse from a Bakhtinian perspective tend to develop their own codes based on the 'complex' and 'valuable conceptual resources' Bakhtin offers (Coulter, 1999: 12). According to Maybin (2001: 70), Bakhtin's master concepts have practical implications for those analysing discourse: a) 'both spoken utterances and written texts need to be understood in terms of how they are responding to, and anticipating, other utterances and texts'; b) 'a speaker may explicitly or implicitly report or appropriate other voices from written texts, authoritative figures, or a comment earlier in the conversation'; c) 'the words and phrases which speakers use bring with them their own social history and association, and introduce a wealth of nuances and connotations into the current speech context'; and d) 'individual utterances and texts will reflect the heteroglossia of language itself, and the conflicts that permeate it, between centrifugal and centripetal forces and between authoritative and inwardly persuasive discourses.'

Findings and Discussion

Direct quotes were usually used by writers to enhance the reliability and authority of their statements. Analysis of the forum posts reveals that although posters quoting from each other were far less frequent occurrences than posters quoting directly from the literary texts (247 in 382 posts), there were still a number of occasions in which writers' borrowed each other's words. There are 46 instances in the fourteen threads analysed when posters inserted a direct quote from other posters into their comments. The examples below show how participants quoted each other in order to agree with a particular statement, disagree with it, pose questions, or develop a topic further:

I fully agree with your suggestion that 'the characters bear their fate stoically', but in my reading I.... (P11 quoting P10)

Why [P11] when you said "finally where is the ghost in this story? Not where he supposed to be"... (P11 quoting P33)

The second part conveys destruction, extinction, a damaged environment, where "the purity of the land is lost to civilization" (P12 quoting P21)

The fact that quotes from other posters are less numerous than quotes from literary texts and less frequently used to build up an argument may be seen as an indication of how much less

authoritative posters considered the others' contribution to the forum. In comparison, it may be also seen as an indication of how much participants regarded the literary text itself as the final authority in matters of interpretation.

Interactions are communicative instances where posters clearly addressed each other by naming and/or signalling a response to another participant's post by framing it with pertinent language. The most common interactive strategies observed were naming, questions and answers and agreeing and disagreeing. Interactions are overt ways of actively responding to what is posted by others, either as an immediate reply or as a delayed response. Moreover, the very acts of posting and replying can be seen as actively sought forms of interaction and a response to someone's utterance. The most frequent interactive strategy employed was the opening address when participants greeted each other, either speaking to the group as a whole or directing their responses to particular individuals. General ways of addressing found are '*Hi All*' and '*Hi everyone*' with variations using the words *hello* instead, but more elaborate versions, such as '*Dear Colleagues*' and '*Hi Readers*', also appear. The usual greeting used when directly addressing another ORG member was '*Dear*' followed by the name of the person. In general, the tone of addressing was polite and frequently posters addressed the previous commentator by name. Names were also frequently used in conjunction with a general greeting, as in '*Dear Chris and All*'. The general address, as in *All*, may be understood as a form of addressing all the other posters involved in the discussion in a particular thread, but it may also be seen as a way posters had to acknowledge that their comments would be read by a larger online audience and as a way of reaching out for other potential ORG members who had not engaged in posting.

Another interactive strategy posters adopted was the use of questions that invited a response, as the in the following examples:

Hi [P3], it is just to *answer your question* addressed to the group (...). I am also *leaving the same question to our dear colleagues: Should the narrator tell everything to his/her reader?* (P04)

Hello All, I'm [P30], from the south of B____. I'm a university teacher and I've been following your discussions with interest. *As for our friend's question* about the narrator's role, my opinion is no, I don't think he should tell us everything! (P30)

Although indirect and rhetorical questions cannot be considered a 'direct' forms of interaction, they may be seen as attempts to prompt some form of response. The examples below illustrate how posters made use of rhetorical questions and indirect forms to invite replies:

We found the last line interesting: "Heaven is for them that bring the rain." *Shall we compare this "rain" to God's blessings?...* (P12)

So... *are you going to let the passion into your lives?* (P61)

...That certainly doesn't happen here. *Wonder what others think.* (P25)

Maybe I myself am going too far on my thoughts about the text... (P23)

Adoptions are instances where a poster borrowed and developed ideas initially posted by others in the same discussion thread. Adoptions can be seen as posters' attempts to build on an idea or theme raised by others. These may be instances where the comments of one poster were prompted by another's previous comments on a theme or topic triggered by the reading of the literary text. There are 167 identified instances of Adoptions in the 382 posts devoted to the discussion of a single short story or poem. The example below shows a clear reference to the Gunesequera's *Goat*:

As for the narrator not having a name, I agree with you, [P12], that it is not relevant, and I also agree with you, [P11], that the narrator is probably the author himself (both were born in Colombo; both are now living in London). (P23)

Adoptions are also instances where one poster presented ideas or raised issues that had been previously proposed by someone else in the same thread without making a direct or indirect reference to the previous post. The poster then simply re-stated a similar point ignoring that it has just been mentioned. In the fifth post into the discussion thread on Wilde's *The Nightingale and the Rose*, a participant made a reference to the religious overtones of the tale. In the post that immediately followed it, another member made no reference to the point brought up by the previous commentator and presented the same idea in a way that suggests that she has either decided to ignore the other member's comment or simply had not read it and had come to the same conclusion inspired directly by the text. In the example below, the two posts are very close to each other and there seems to be no attempt to develop the topic first presented:

This text has much of a whole spiritual dimension; it has much of similar to *The Lord's sacrifice for mankind salvation*. So has the Nightingale's sacrifice towards the young Student's Love salvation. (First post by P12)

This story of love comes from the remote time, even in the **bible**. We can see that *God loves the world and gave his only Son who was killed by the same people*. (Follow-up post by P04)

Another similar instance occurred in the thread on Tagore's *The Parrot's Tale* when a participant commented of the historical context of the short story creation and the second poster after her made a similar comment ignoring the previous remark:

The moment I read this tale was *first published in Bengali in 1918* it made me think of Bengali situation at that time. It was still *a British colony* and striving for independence (*together with India* and other places on that region) (First post by P23)

Though the story was written *long back* in the context of the *colonial education system of India*, its appeal is universal. (Follow-up post by P62)

However, instances where posters developed a topic previously brought up by another poster are much more frequent. Previous ideas were then presented under a different angle adding a different nuance to the discussion, directly or indirectly acknowledging other participants' contributions. The exchange below between two posters in the thread on Wilde's story may serve as an example:

The Nightingale interprets things through her own emotions, for as Wilde himself had remarked, "No great artist ever sees things as they really are." (P19)

[P19] has given us the key: literature sometimes is just like a mirror and Oscar Wilde saw nothing but absence of love in it, or maybe he did not find one. Literature is just a feeling we have in front of a mirror (P18)

[P18]: Now that you speak of mirrors, it almost seems as if Wilde has held up an enchanting mirror through his story to reflect real life and society. (P19)

It is important to mention that the relationships between readers in the forum were not limited to a single analytical category in each post as generally presented above. Instead, they are all interwoven and many times overlap. Posts often show a combination of features that denote

both connections with the literary text and with other posts as exemplified in this long comment on Gunesequera's short story *Goat*:

Hi folks (*interaction*), this was the first time I'd encountered Romesh Gunesekara and I loved this story. Thanks once again for leading me to another fine new (for me) author. I agree with many of the comments made here (*interaction*), especially the one made about the cultural mishmash present in the story. I'm always drawn to this as I've experienced first-hand something similar (*adoption*). But what struck me most on my initial reading of the story were the two characters of Byron and his friend (I've only now realised that he's not actually named in the story which highlights what I want to say) (*interpretation*). Well, I'm off to think some more about the role of the camera in the story. Thanks for those who pointed this out (*interaction*). I hadn't really noticed the importance of the cultural mixture (*adoption*). (P24)

Analysis of the relationships between comments on the forum posted by different readers showed that participants used direct quoting and a range of interactive strategies to establish a conversation with their fellow readers in the ORG. These are the most noticeable distinguishing features of the interactions in the forum and are understood here as an attempt to extract from other group members a written reply that would contribute to the ongoing dialogue. At a deeper level, dialogic interaction is found in a poster's drive towards what others have said (*adoption*) evidenced by the borrowing and developing other poster's ideas, even when not openly acknowledged by later posters. Such borrowing of ideas may be the result of not having read the other's post, but it may also be that posters had reached such a high degree of agreement with what was said before, or had already internalized the message to a point, that they already saw these ideas as theirs. Instances of borrowing are, however, much less frequent than topic development. More common are the situations in which posters addressed an issue or topic related to the text from a particular viewpoint and others engaged in an unfolding exchange about it for a string of comments. It can be argued that this serves as evidence of the desire to establish a dialogical relationship with other group members and create an online community of readers.

Moreover, the internal 'stratification of discourse' and the 'diversity of social speech types' that Bakhtin (1981: 262) argues are present in the Novel are also observed in the discourse building strategies posters employ in the ORG forum. Participants adopted, at different occasions and often within the same comment, a variety of styles and authorial voices which can be also equated to some of the social and interactional roles performed by students in face-to-face ELT classroom based reading circles. The combination of direct quotes, interactive strategies and the inclusion of others' ideas in a participant's posts points towards the heteroglossic nature of their writing.

Conclusions

This paper examined to which extent participants' posts to the online reading group forum were shaped by the group interaction and which compositional features in their written comments indicated that. The findings of this study confirm previous research on interactions in face-to-face reading groups and online communities and show that there is a dialogical orientation in the communicative strategies that participants employ in the forum. This may help those interested in exploring computer mediated communication in teaching and learning to understand how teachers and TESOL students construct their comments when communicating in online professional forums and social media. Practitioners interested in conducting research projects with their own students in distance learning and/or blended courses may find the categories used to analyse posts in relation to each other useful to better

understand their students' online interactions and communicative strategies. Online forum moderators working in educational contexts may find that the use of literary extracts and quotes can be a useful tool to trigger greater interaction in the forum and facilitate cognitive and emotional engagement with the topic proposed for discussion.

Above all, the findings of this study may be relevant for an assessment of the viability and usefulness of establishing online reading groups as tools to promote the creation and development of communities of practice. They may also contribute to a re-evaluation of the role of literature in language teacher education and the employment of alternative methodological approaches to the integration of technology mediated communication, literature and language in educational contexts.

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