Emerging bilingual readers' responses to metafictive picturebooks:

A cognitive exploration of multiliteracies.

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Abstract

The current global trends in migration and transnationalism mean societies around the world are increasingly becoming culturally, ethnically and racially mixed. In such a world there ought to be changes to educational policy, curricula and school practices to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of students. There is an urgent need for people to understand and empathise with one another and to overcome the many cultural differences that act as barriers to community and communication. It is gratifying, therefore, to see varied and inclusive pedagogic practices being used to equip young learners with the skills to bridge cultural gaps. One such resource is children's literature, and in recent years educators have been using picturebooks, 'a species of children's literature' (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 2013, p 1), to address prominent issues of diverse experiences and global realities (Hope 2008; Rutter 2006). A number of recent studies have shown that using picturebooks enhances a range of skills, including language acquisition, visual literacy and cultural acclimatization (e.g., Arizpe et al. 2014; Bland 2013; McGilp 2014; Mourão 2012; Sipe 2008). These studies have used a range of theoretical frameworks to investigate the meaning-making processes of young readers.

Located in this sociocultural milieu and in new directions in academic thought and pedagogic practices, this doctoral study investigates children's visual, emotional and critical literacy from a multimodal and cognitive-literary perspective. The 'mirror, windows and doors' metaphor which argues that readers see reflections of themselves in what they read, look through windows into unfamiliar worlds and people, and finally step through new doors when they undergo a transformation in their understanding (Sims Bishop 1990) is a crucial understanding of literature that underpins this study. The overall hypothesis of the study is that appreciating the thoughts and feelings of characters in picturebooks can help hone emotional literacy skills in young readers, which in turn might facilitate a better understanding of real-life people. For my study I chose metafictive picturebooks, which are known to jar the readers into a sense of literary alertness and interactivity (Sipe & McGuire 2008). The inquiry involved longitudinal fieldwork with primary school-aged bilingual children, engaging in a variety of verbal and visual response tasks that focused on literary engagement with the texts.

The results showed the children engaging deeply with the characters' mental states, responding analytically to the visual and verbal synergy (Sipe 1998) and using their

Theory of Mind to demonstrate identification with the textual characters. The affordances of the metafictive nature of the texts allowed a critical-questioning stance in the young readers, making them aware of their own responses of the texts, developing their emotional literacy and metacognitive skills.

By highlighting the sophisticated natures of the young children's responses and their ability to negotiate complex constructions in seemingly playful picturebooks, this study underscores the need for slow, careful and repeated looking and investigating texts as pieces of intriguing puzzles. Reading metafiction becomes an 'embodied' activity (Nikolajeva 2014b) where readers see, think, and feel, and simultaneously become aware of their own somatic responses. This ultimately develops emotional literacy as well as critical literacy skills. The study submits that careful and continued nurturing within and outside the school environment can make it possible for children to become aware of their own emotions, show increased awareness of others in interactions, as well as develop the potential to empathise and identify with people from backgrounds different to their own.

Contents

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Dedication

To my parents who taught me to love words and reading

To my wonderful little girl, Saanvi – my Hia, my sunshine xx

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

Printed Name: Soumi Dey

Chapter 1 Introduction

'*Love words, agonise over sentences, pay attention to the world.'*

Susan Sontag

1.1 A palimpsest of stories

(*Palimpsest (n) refers to the ancient practice of reusing vellum manuscripts upon which faint traces of older scribes remain – new writing superimposed on older, effaced writing.*)

Shaktinagar, 1988: Every summer, I used to write postcards to my Dadu, my mother's father. These postcards, written in simple Bangla and careful handwriting, were an expression of love, written with a sense of accomplishment. These started when I was about seven or eight years old and continued into my early teens. I was born to Bengali parents who had left their home in West Bengal to move to northern India, to follow my father's job as an engineer. We were economic immigrants of the prestigious kind, living with similar families hailing from far-flung cultures and communities. The remote township in Uttar Pradesh (UP), flourishing in the shadow of the finest Thermal Power station in India, allowed us a privileged, safe and multicultural upbringing. By the time I was seven years old, I was writing and speaking English and Hindi as my first and second languages at school. Links to West Bengal, two days away by train geographically, were tenuous, but for the efforts of my parents, who spoke to my sister and me in Bangla, fed us Bangali food and read us Bangali stories. The writing, however, was not going that well, getting pushed aside during the school term time, the (baby-ish) books and notebooks brought out reluctantly by me only during vacations. The postcards would, of course, stop during the vacations we would spend with family in West Bengal, but the affectionate teasing for speaking the mother tongue with a Hindi accent and not reading and writing Bangla properly, would not.

Back home in UP, my friends and teachers who could never pronounce my Bangali name right, became the lens through which I saw myself. Different, not really belonging. My father brought me books, mostly classics of English literature and I devoured them eagerly, and, to my classmates, became the girl who likes to use big words. As a child growing up in the India of 1980s I was also brought up on retellings of the *Ramayana* and the

Mahabharata, *Aesops Fables* and Chinese and Russian literature (in translation) (especially those published by Raduga Publishers) as well as contemporary Indian publications by the Children's Book Trust (CBT). Obsessive reading became my world; the stories I read, windows to other possible worlds.

Glasgow 2018: Every summer, my daughter, who is turning eight soon, goes to visit her relations in India. She considers herself Scottish with an Indian heart. She speaks English in an accented Glaswegian, which I have to translate to 'proper' English for my parents, is learning French at school and speaks a version of Bangla, which is puzzling as well as musical to my ears. Being the only Indian in her class and seeing herself from the lens of her teachers and friends (who often cannot pronounce her name right), she knows she is different. She loses herself in her love of drawing and colouring, in picturebooks, trawling youTube for 'real' unicorn and mermaid videos and begging me for 'another story please!' at night. Every night. I see her childhood, so different from mine, but with the same recurring themes of languages, reading and literacy; of multiculturalism and differentness; of migration and journeys; of distances and belonging.

This, then, is my story and hers with some of the lines traced distinctly while the others blur in the background; yet others merge and become more visible in an ever-evolving palimpsest. This is also the story of stories, of reading into people what we read in literature, of identifying with real and fictional people, of each informing the other, and ultimately this is the story of learning that 'different' is 'alright', that 'different' is wonderful.

1.2 The context

'Just as populations are shaped by social, political and cultural changes, so too are literacy practices' (Arizpe et al. 2014, p 26).

With a surge in global trends of migration and transnationalism, modern societies are becoming increasingly multi-layered, multicultural and multilingual. This potent and rich mix of ethnicities and languages, as well as of emerging text-types and technologies, is reflected in our everyday interactions and raises issues about culture and identity. While school curricula are slow to catch up with complex and evolving phenomena, there is evidence for an 'increasing variety of genres' and innovative themes appearing in

classrooms, many of them reflecting the 'diverse experiences and global realities' encountered by learners (Hope 2008; Rutter 2006).

In this background, I found myself, having made the emotional journey from India to Scotland for family and education, adjusting to a new country and culture. As an EAL teacher and a mother to a young child growing up bilingual and bicultural, I was concerned by the increasing narrative of having to conform to institutional norms that promote a set of values and traditions that are 'white, middle-class and monolingual' (Weimelt 2015). Several socio-political factors like racist nativism (Perez-Huber et al. 2008; Nieto & Bode 2008) and colour-blind individualism (Leonardo 2013) lead to students being compelled to shed their multicultural and multidimensional identities for a chance at school and academic success. These, according to Valenzuela (1999), were 'subtractive forms of school policies and practices' which gradually and systematically strips learners belonging to smaller ethnic minority groups of their linguistic and cultural identities with the aim of homogenising and assimilating them to the larger, hence dominant, group. While I had never experienced any form of overt racism, I was concerned for children like my daughter who internalise wider social messages about inferiority stemming from 'unequal social locations such as race' as was discovered by studies such as Gardner (2017, p 122).

As a response to these internal, emotional as well as political debates, I resorted to my love of literature, which in the first place, like Sontag says, made me 'pay attention to the world.' In the following study, I bring together several strands of thinking, preoccupations and understandings, both personal and academic to begin to challenge the internalised messages of inferiority.

Picturebooks and metafiction

My love for children's literature, discovered during my MA studies, many years ago in the University of Hyderabad, found a special place when I started reading my favourite children's books to my little girl who was still a toddler. I explored a range of picturebooks with my infant daughter and discovered the joys of sharing books such as *Each Peach Pear Plum* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg 1978), *Peepo* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg 1981), *Mummy and Me* (Chichester Clark 2009), *Monkey and Me* (Gravett 2007) and *The Odd Egg* (Gravett 2009). It was then that I realised that some picturebooks were distinct, different from the others, special even. To me as an experienced reader, as well as to my daughter who was an utterly novice reader, they were more fun, more playful, engaging and much more memorable than the rest. *Monkey and Me* was one such book. It has an easy-to-recall

rhyme with simple repetitive phrases – 'monkey and me… we went to see… we went to see some…ELEPHANTS!' There is a big element of surprise in the narrative, which works very well with each page turn and is gripping for young readers. I started looking at other books by Emily Gravett and realized that I had come across an author with an astounding command of both the artwork as well as the verbal content of the books. Upon doing some preliminary reading into picturebooks, I realised that I had come upon the special genre of the metafictive or postmodern picturebook. While I was yet to find out the difference between the labels (I go into the distinctions in the following chapter), I was captivated by the element of surprise, disruption and self-reflexivity in each text. Indeed the notion of self-reflexivity was particularly close to my heart since I had investigated self-reflexivity in the writings of four modern authors during my MPhil research (Das 2005).

Further reading into the critical literature led me to discover more recent developments in the field. I discovered that children's literature, and picturebook studies in particular, is emerging as a resource that builds on the home and community literacy practices exploring the 'funds of knowledge' (c.f. the work of Cummins 1996, 2000, 2005; Gregory 1997, 2008; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti 2005) as well as addresses different forms of literacy like the visual, digital and emotional. While I was still looking for my exact 'angle' into the field of picturebook studies as a research scholar, I happened to read about recent brain research on the benefits of fiction in terms of increasing empathy in readers. The studies showed just how stimulating art and narrative were for thinking processes (Heath 2000) as well as for supporting emotional and empathetical experiences (Nikolajeva 2014a), an essential component of intercultural understanding. This is how I came to admire the works of a number of scholars, particularly Nikolajeva, Stephens and Kummerling-Meibauer situated within a growing and interdisciplinary field of cognitive literary criticism, which primarily investigates readers' literary and emotional engagement with texts.

Reading Nikolajeva, I was inspired by her assertion that picturebooks could act as 'simulation grounds' or 'training fields' for improving young readers' emotional literacy, allowing them to benefit from the socialisation potential of literature (Nikolajeva 2012, 2014a, 2014b). According to Nikolajeva, 'If literature was to 'serve as a training field for the social brain' it should 'logically offer challenge, not comfort' (Nikolajeva 2014b, p 87). These metafictive picturebooks, with their challenging and disruptive narratives, are therefore ideal 'simulation grounds' or 'training fields' for children to develop both their Theory of Mind (ToM, the skill of understanding what other people might be feeling from their expressions and behaviour) and empathy.

Emotional awareness and understanding, towards empathy

It is suggested that children growing up in a multiethnic and multilingual society who are required to interact with people of different cultures and backgrounds need a combination of well-developed empathy and Theory of Mind (Mar & Oatley 2008), a pressing need in superdiverse communities in cities like Glasgow. This fact is also reflected in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Education Scotland, online, 2017) especially through criteria like 'communicating with confidence' and 'showing increasing awareness of others in interactions' included in the aims for good Citizenship.

With these factors in mind, and taking my cue from Nikolajeva and other cognitive literary scholars like Bettina Kummerling-Meibauer and Roberta Seelinger Trites, I designed the research project involving young bilingual children reading metafictive picturebooks. When it came to the question of text selection for my inquiry, I reached out quite naturally to Gravett's picturebooks. After some debate, I selected 3 of Emily Gravett's books, which are: *Wolves* (2005), *Again!* (2011), and *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts* (2013). As I analyse and explain in detail in Chapter Three, these books certainly qualify as metafictive, postmodern texts, something that was an important criterion for my inquiry.

1.3 Research question and the objectives of the inquiry

Using a cognitive critical stance, I argue that by decoding 'emotion ekphrasis' (the expression of emotions through words, actions, facial expressions and bodily postures) (Nikolajeva 2014b), children can activate their Theory of Mind by engaging with fictional characters in picturebooks. Drawing on recent empirical evidence that reading fiction and picturebooks improves Theory of Mind (Alsup 2015; Kidd and Castano 2013; Berns et al. 2013), this study uses Gravett's metafictive books as 'training fields' (Nikolajeva 2014b) by providing children opportunities to become more aware of emotions in the narratives, helping them 'read' emotions in the characters. It may be extrapolated that these skills help in improving the children's Theory of Mind, which ultimately has the potential to benefit their real world interactions.

The data collected using qualitative visual enquiry methods during the fieldwork was analysed and the results underscored crucial links to visual literacy, culture and identity, helping children seek 'multiple perspectives' (McLaughlin & DeVoogd 2004) with a view to making them more accepting of 'difference' in the wider intersectionality of cultures.

Further, I argue that metafiction, by offering a sense of agency (Heath 2016), enhances literary and emotional interpretation and, ultimately, critical literacy. Finally, the learning of the children also links with the objectives and outcomes in areas such as Citizenship and Modern Languages in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence.

Mar and Oatley (2008) propose that engaging in simulative experiences of fiction literature can facilitate our understanding of others who are different from ourselves and can enhance our capacity for empathy and social inference (Theory of Mind) – which I refer to together as emotional literacy. For young children, picturebooks can take the place of longer narratives in written fiction (which may not be easily accessible to their developmental stage). Learning a new language (English in this case) requires learning a combination of words and facial expressions, intonation and syntax, idiomatic expressions and gestures. This study aims to bring together these varied aspects of language learning through the use of picturebooks.

The following is the research objective and the related questions for my inquiry mentioned in brief. They will be further elaborated in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Main research objective:

How, and to what extent, can metafictive picturebooks be used as visual, verbal and emotional literacy tools for emerging bilingual readers?

This overarching question brings together the different strands of metafictive picturebooks, bilinguality and multiliteracies, especially visual and emotional literacy. Situated in the multiliteracy needs of children growing up in a diverse and complex world, this study aims to investigate the role of metafictive picturebooks in making children more competent readers of emotions in fictional characters. The design is such that it aims to use the selected picturebooks as 'simulation grounds' or 'training fields' for children to develop both their visual literacy and Theory of Mind (ToM) as mentioned earlier. To interpret children's transactions (Iser 1978) with the text, a combination of reader response theory (Rosenblatt 1982, 1994) and the cognitive critical lens are used.

The overarching objective was divided into three further questions, each addressing further individual strands.

Question 1: How do metafictive picturebooks afford reader engagement?

Question 2: How do young bilingual children respond to the multimodal and metafictive features in the texts?

Question 3: How do young bilingual children interact with the characters' emotional states in the narratives?

This study aims to build upon existing knowledge and further our understanding of the epistemic nature of metafictive picturebooks. First, the enquiry focuses on the craft of metafictive picturebooks and the ways in which their features stimulate and enhance reader engagement. Next, the focus moves to young emergent bilingual literary readers (children) and their experience of reading the selected metafictive picturebooks. In this way, the study examines both how visual and verbal features afford awareness of the different emotions demonstrated by the characters and how the children engage affectively with the narrative and the characters of the texts. Thus, this enquiry examines the process that evokes emotions and feelings in the readers, leading to an interaction with the characters' emotional states and in some cases, greater empathy with them.

The underlying assumption is that all reading affects readers, be they young or old. The hypothesis is that picturebooks can be used as training fields to improve awareness of emotions in other characters and, by extending this awareness, children become more confortable talking about emotions, possibly improve in expressing their own feelings as well as demonstrate empathy through their response to the picturebooks.

1.4 Thesis structure

With the commencement of this research story, the palimpsest of stories that I started with gets further written upon – by my research discoveries, by the journeys of the books as well as the stories that the children write and tell me.

Here I present the formal structure of the thesis as it unfolds chapter by chapter.

Chapter 2 – A literature review in three parts

This chapter comprises of three separate sections each reviewing the literature of the individual strands comprising this inquiry. The first section reviews the recent advances in the field of cognitive literary criticism and its forays into children's literature and uses the cognitive lens to view notions of literary response and engagement.

The second section focuses on the field of sociocultural theory, social semiotics, multimodality and multiliteracies (New London Group 1996). I explore how children's

literature, picturebooks in particular, help engage visual literacy skills through the affordances of postmodern, metafictive and radical change features. I argue that the visual and emotional literacy skills engaged while reading picturebooks open imaginative pathways, inviting readers to 'read' the characters' emotions as well as becoming aware of their own emotional reactions. It can be suggested that by using their imagination, readers can begin to mirror what the characters in the narratives feel, which is often a precursor to empathy.

In the third and final section, I explore my longstanding interest in bilingual children. I start with the concept of bilingualism itself and what it means to be a young emergent bilingual. I then present my Vygotskian approach to linguistic and literacy development in culturally situated readers.

Chapter 3 – The selected metafictive picturebooks: The vehicle that carries the study

In this chapter, I explore and analyse the four selected metafictive picturebooks in detail. The textual content analysis is based on the tenets of cognitive criticism investigating the various devices authors use to evoke emotional reactions and emotional engagement from readers.

Chapter 4 – Research design and methodological overview

Chapter four details the longitudinal project I designed to work with a selected group of children for a period of one year. The children were all bilingual, and studying in Primary One and Two (five and six years of age). During this time, I met them during three separate interventions lasting a month each. The length of time (one year) allowed me to see the arc of progression in the development of their visual, verbal and emotional awareness. Next, the chapter explains my analysis framework The empirical study with emergent bilingual children draws upon reader response methods that have been used by earlier studies like Arizpe and Styles (2003), Sipe (2008), Sipe and Pantaleo (2008), and most recently and particularly by Arizpe et al. (2014) while incorporating elements of cognitive criticism in the data analysis framework.

Chapter 5 – Children responding to *Wolves*

In this first of the analysis chapters, I present a detailed thematic analysis of the children's response to the first picturebook presented to them. The responses of the children show their surprise at the metafictive features of the books at the same time as they resist the unconventional and disruptive narrative style.

Chapter 6 – Children responding to *Again!*

Chapter Six presents the children's verbal, visual and performative response to the picturebook *Again!*, with a special emphasis on colours and related emotions.

Chapter 7 – Children responding to *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*

Like the two previous chapters, Chapter Seven presents the participants' multimodal responses to *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*. The focus here is on children extending the narratives with their own artwork and performative responses.

Chapter 8 – Children negotiating metafiction: A training field for multiliteracies

This penultimate chapter brings together the findings from the three previous chapters. The three main strands of thoughts come together in complex interweaving patterns laying out the significant learnings from each chapter. The affordances of metafictive picturebooks, the learnings of bilingual children and the developments in their emotional literacy skills are synthesised and summarised here.

Chapter 9 – Concluding thoughts

In the concluding chapter, I wrap up the journey of the fieldwork and return to the reflections of the teachers who were involved with the fieldwork. I reflect on the crucial learnings from the project and revisit the research question and the objectives that I started the journey with and finally suggest how this study could inform pedagogy and future research.

In this first chapter, I have shared the palimpsest of stories and outlined the reasons that drew me to this area of study, as an EAL teacher, as a mother and as a researcher whose personal journey reflects the journeys of my research participants. The title of my thesis: "Emerging bilingual readers' responses to metafictive picturebooks: A cognitive exploration of multiliteracies" reflects the biggest concerns – emergent bilingual readers, metafictive picturebooks, cognitive literary criticism – the three biggest strands that I attempt to weave together in this research enquiry. In the next chapter I start creating the tapestry, beginning with a review of the literature in the field of cognitive literary criticism.

Chapter 2 A review of literature in three parts

This chapter brings together the three important aspects of my enquiry. The first section introduces cognitive literary criticism, linking it to children's literature and the notions of literary response and engagement. Here I delve into the concepts of the cognitive and affective brain, and how schema theory and the notion of anticipation can be used to explain reader engagement with the narrative. The section further explores how the human mirror neuron system helps readers feel for the characters and improves understanding emotion ekphrasis and activates readers' Theory of Mind.

In the second section, I position my enquiry in the realms of sociocultural theory, social semiotics, multimodality and multiliteracies. I explore how children's literature, picturebooks in particular, help engage visual literacy skills. I argue that postmodern, metafictive and radical change features used in complex picturebooks help enhance imagination and affective engagement in readers.

In the third and final section I explore my interest in bilingual children starting with exploring the concept of bilingualism, with a focus on young emergent bilinguals. The section details linguistic and literacy development in young bilingual children within the Vygotskian notions of cultural situatedness of readers.

Through examining these multiple strands described in the following sections, I hope to weave together the different theories that help create the tapestry of my enquiry.

2.1 Cognitive criticism in children's literature

2.1.1 Cognitive literary criticism: Addressing the gap in picturebook studies

This first section of the literature review introduces cognitive literary criticism as it has been used in children's literature studies. I start by setting the context of how this emerging theory has been used since 2012 by different children's literature scholars, and in particular by picturebook experts. My focus is on the ways that the gap in picturebook scholarship and reader response studies might be addressed through cognitive criticism. With the background of my layperson's understanding of concepts like mind, cognition, affect and emotions, I look at readers' engagement and how cognitive criticism might help us understand how fictional narratives affect readers. Since understanding literary characters is a central area of focus in my research, I look at devices such as Theory of Mind and emotion ekphrasis coupled with the notion of narrative schemas and anticipation, which make us, as readers, feel bound to the narrative. Finally, I refer to how young children's reading metafictive picturebooks might further our understanding of their engagement with picturebooks characters.

'The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go' said Dr Seuss in *I Can Read With My Eyes Shut* (1978).

These lines capture the dual focus of much of the literature aimed at children. The playful rhyming form engages and entertains the ear, while the content appeals to the young reader imploring them to read, and more importantly, *learn*, with the promise of future gains.

In the realm of children's literature, the thrust has been two-fold: the focus of literary critics has been on the nature of aesthetics of the works of literature. Simultaneously, educators have emphasised the pedagogical value of such literature. Scholars like Rose (1992), Dusinberre (1987), Lurie (1990), Hunt (2006), Coats (2004), Nodelman (2008), Hamer, Nodelman & Reimer (2017), Nikolajeva (2010), Kidd (2011), Rudd (2013) have delved into the epistemic nature of different types of works of children's literature. Nikolajeva (2014b) notes that while 'early empirical studies of young readers focused on *what* children read (Hall & Coles, 1999) or occasionally *why* they read (Fry, 1985)' it is much more difficult to explain '*how* children read', how they 'engage with' and 'make meaning from' literary texts (Nikolajeva 2014b, p 1, original emphasis). Literary scholars, and educational professionals in particular, have been interested in promoting reading amongst children and adults. Though often reading meaningfully, i.e., deep reading, is mistakenly equated to reading skills (being able to read off the page, without necessarily

appreciating the content). Simple comprehension and code-breaking kind of literacy practices do not answer the 'how' of reading just as in the quote above from Dr Seuss, we are not clear *how* that all-important learning from reading occurs.

Since the turn of the century, there have been an increasing number of studies that have tried to establish types of meaning making from texts. Almost all of the current/existing empirical studies of children reading and responding to a variety of literature are based on theories of reader-response (Arizpe and Styles, 2016). Studies by Evans 1998, Bearne & Watson 2000, Arizpe & Styles 2003, Sipe & Pantaleo 2008, Pantaleo 2008a, Evans 2009, etc. have used a range of empirical methods like interviews (structured and semi-structured), observations, creative responses like drawing, retelling, play and performance etc., which reveal something of what child readers think or feel about the works of literature they are interacting with. However, reader response depends on the exteriorisation of response and none of these studies allow us into the internal workings of how ideas and sensations about the texts are formed. What is happening inside the minds of the children as they read?

Response is not quite the same as engagement. While engagement is the internal workings of the mind, response is the outward expression of thoughts and feelings. Response can only show us a close approximation of comprehension. The researcher's task is further complicated by the fact that often children are unable to articulate and express themselves fully. What takes place during the reading process in the readers' minds is fuzzy and chaotic; we do not have unmediated access to the process except only through the statements readers make in trying to explain these processes/impressions (Protherough, 1987). What we are not able to see is the interiority of the meaning making, the internal connections and processes – the *how* that Nikolajeva mentions earlier.

It is this *how* of reader engagement with the text that cognitive criticism turns its gaze on. Underlying the concept of cognitive criticism as a literary theory is a consistent emphasis of delving deeper into reader engagement with literature. This is the most prominent reason why I believe this theory is the best suited to this research enquiry.

2.1.2 Cognitive criticism, literary studies and the 'cognitive turn'

This study area is a derivative from cognitive sciences like cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics where scholars like Lakoff and Johnson studied metaphors (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980) and other literary approaches to reading fiction and understanding the language. In more recent times, Stockwell's *Cognitive*

Poetics: An Introduction (2002) gave us a detailed conceptualisation of the aspects that pertain to literary studies. For a more detailed overview of the use of cognitive criticism in literary studies look up Stockwell (2002), Bruner (1990), Tsur (1992), Mandler (1984), Gibbs & Gibbs (1994), Turner (1991, 1996, 2002), Barcelona (2000), Crane (2001), Hogan (2003) and Gavins & Steen (2003). A number of recent theorists including Boyd (2010), Burke (2011) and Armstrong (2013) have written at length about how cognitive criticism is a homogeneous interdisciplinary theory, which can link important aspects of literary studies like perception, empathy, memory, thoughts, and language.

Since the 1990s we have seen several scholars in the cognitive arena using children's literature to illustrate their arguments about readers' engagement with literature (for instance Turner 1996; Zunshine 2001; Stockwell 2002; Keen 2007; Vermeule 2011). These scholars were investigating adult engagement and the adult processes of reading.

It was not until 2011-2012, that children's literature scholars started taking advantage of advances in cognitive studies to investigate younger readers' engagement with works of literature. In many ways, the study of real readers underpinned by neurosciences and cognitive psychology was pioneered by Heath and Wolf (2012). As of 2018, several senior scholars, as well as younger researchers, have started explorations in this arena. Scholars like Nikolajeva, Stephens, Coats, Seelinger Trites, Shonoda and Kummerling-Meibauer showed an interest in pursuing this interdisciplinary line of enquiry from around 2011-12. Stephens calls this the 'cognitive turn in children's literary criticism' (2014). In 2014, several articles were published in the two annual volumes of the IRSCL journal, IRCL *International Research in Children's Literature* (IRCL) that were based around cognitive approaches to children's literature. In his editorial to the second issue of IRCL journal (2014) Stephens introduces this 'tentative' foray into the area of cognitive studies and underscores the possibility that 'a theory or hunch' about understanding reading and response 'may now be demonstrable through empirical research' (p. vi). Thus he presses the case for increasing the validity of reader response enquiry, which might be facilitated through the use of cognitive criticism.

Several related and overlapping terms such as 'literary cognitivism', 'cognitive literary theory', 'cognitive narratology' etc., have been used by different scholars in their respective studies. For example, 'cognitive poetics', a term that gained prominence from Stockwell's treatise on the subject, focuses on the syntactical devices and the linguistics signifiers in a writer's language. 'Cognitive narratology', on the other hand, is defined as

'the study of mind-relevant aspects of storytelling practices' (Herman 2013, p 2). I will take the cue from Nikolajeva and use the term cognitive literary criticism, or simply cognitive criticism, for the purposes of this research.

This new branch of study is, as Stephens points out, not a critique of reader response but an extension of the effectiveness of reader response. Nikolajeva, who was one of the earliest proponents of the cognitive literary theory, advocates that it will help access and judge readers' cognitive and emotional engagement with texts. From theses theorists, we understand that the use of cognitive criticism in relation to literary studies is two-fold:

First, examining reader engagement: Re-thinking the activity of reading and literacy from the point of view of the reader's engagement with the literary texts.

Second: Examining devices in works of literature: Re-thinking how we look at the works of literature and how they are constructed to 'maximize, or perhaps rather optimize reader engagement' (Nikolajeva 2014b, p 4).

Before I go into the details of the theory itself, it is necessary to provide some background to this area of human psychology and its entry point into children's literature because of earlier understanding. The next subsection lays out some basic concepts of the mental processes before delving deeper into the interdisciplinarity of this study.

2.1.3 Mental processes that afford reader engagement – emotions, schemas and anticipation

Cognitive theorists think of the mind as 'a collection of mental processes' (Fischbach, 1992, p 48). From early times, philosophers and scientists have wondered about how the mind is related to the brain. Fischbach in his 1992 essay 'Mind and Brain' confesses that he does not know what is mind, just as Rene Descartes didn't know: 'Three centuries ago he [Descartes] described the mind as an extracorporeal entity that was expressed through the pineal gland. Descartes was wrong about the pineal gland, but the debate he stimulated regarding the relationship between mind and brain rages on'. Cognitive theorists reject this Cartesian split and often equate the mind 'with consciousness, a subjective sense of self-awareness' known to reside in the cerebral cortex, also the home of 'urges, moods, desires and subconscious forms of learning' (p 49).

Recent advances in neuroscience are able to confirm positions that were heretofore theoretical such as the importance of early experience in development (Bransford, Brown & Cocking 2008). Research in several distinct yet overlapping scientific fields such as

developmental psychology, cognitive psychology and neuroscience have, in recent years, converged their findings to support and substantiate claims. Findings from research related to these fields have contributed 'details about learning and development [that] have converged to form a more complete picture of how intellectual development occurs' (Bransford, Brown & Cocking 2008, p 90). The mechanisms of learning have been clarified by neuroscience by the advent of certain non-invasive procedures. Imaging technologies such as positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) have been incorporated to allow researchers to observe and monitor the human learning processes closely (ibid.). Mental events can be correlated with patterns of nerve impulses in the brain.

Through these non-invasive procedures we now understand that the 'thinking' brain houses cognitive (mental) processes like memory, intelligence, reasoning and language learning. The 'feeling' brain, on the other hand, is the seat of the affect, i.e., of emotional and social foundations (Damasio 1999, 2006; Davidson 1992; Kosslyn 1987; Miall 1995, Tulving 2002). (For a lucid and accessible entry point into brain's complex neural mechanisms without feeling like I was 'being kidnapped by aliens' (Stephens 2014), I found *The Jossey-Bass Reader on the Brain and Learning* (2008) very helpful.) It is this feeling brain, which processes emotions, that concerns us. In right-handed people, the right hemisphere of brain is believed to have the ability to perceive emotional stimuli in visual and linguistics material and damage to the right hemisphere showed impaired ability to comprehend both for the 'expressive (or prosodic) aspects of spoken language, for facial expressions' and other 'non-verbal signals of emotions' (Miall 1995, p 288). However, in the neuroscience community there is an uneasy consensus about the roles of the right and left hemispheres of the human brain. While it is a debate beyond the scope of this thesis, it is safe to say that the concept of emotional literacy involves both the thinking and the feeling brain since it involves both the cognitive as well as the affective processes.

Emotions and feelings

Scholars have explored emotions and how they relate to the somatic functions of the mind and the body. Originating from the Greek, 'soma' means 'body' and 'somatic' turns to study of the body, as opposed to the mind. However, brain neurologists such as Damasio (2003) show that the mind and body relations are not dichotomous and that cognition is embodied. He differentiates further between emotions and feelings. **Emotions** are movements, rooted in the body, which are unconscious neural patterns which come before

any feeling. The word 'emotion' comes from the Latin *ex* – 'out of' and *motio* – 'movement', meaning originating from movements. **Feelings** on the other hand emerge from perceiving these neural patterns generated by the brain.

Emotions are further distinguished as primary and secondary emotions. From a psycholinguistic perspective, primary emotions occur due to neural activity in certain parts of the brain like amygdala, and are visible through the person's tone of voice, pitch, body posture, eyes, expressions, etc. When these are perceived by the brain for a certain period of time, (which varies according to the situation and the individual), they start to translate into feelings or 'moods.' As mentioned earlier, the children were able to decode these primary emotions and notice feelings like happiness, sadness, anger, fear or disgust.

Secondary emotions, on the other hand, are changes in the state of the body and sometimes manifest as changes in a person's vital statistics like the heart racing, palms becoming sweaty, tensing of the muscles, hair on end or goose pimples. These are sensations caused by some external object, stimulus or memory and originate in the pre-frontal areas of the brain. These secondary emotions are linked to the primary emotions, in that they give rise to more complex feelings than simple emotions like happiness or sadness. For example, frustration is a complex form of the simple emotion anger.

Along with emotion, other related mental phenomena of interest here are schemas and anticipation. Both help in engaging with literature and in determining readers' reaction to literary texts. Understanding how anticipation works relates to schema theory, which explains how readers predict events in set patterns. Since I am investigating reader engagement with metafictive picturebooks, where the narrative foils expectations every so often, the mechanics of anticipation and relevant schemas is important.

Schema

Schemas are 'the "genes" of understanding that help us to identify objects, events and agents' (Oziewicz 2015, p 58). Piaget proposed that cognitive growth occurs when learners establish schemas or mental categories or cognitive structures of understanding about subjects and events (1970). These mental categories are described as 'knowledge already stored in memory' and how this stored knowledge 'functions in the process of interpreting new information and allowing it to enter and become a part of the knowledge store' (Anderson and Pearson 1984 p. 255). A person's past reactions and experiences become the background against which all new experiences are placed, categorised and eventually

assimilated. Schema theory explains the interaction of readers with the text – 'how readers use prior knowledge to comprehend and learn from the text' (An 2013, p 130).

According to Oziewicz, schemas are the smallest unit of understanding whereas 'scripts' are 'higher-level units built from schemas', the building blocks of the story (Oziewicz 2015, p 58). In terms of literary analysis, schema theory refers to the readers' existing knowledge and experience of a recurring pattern, which the readers bring to the process of reading the text (Stockwell 2002, p 75-89). Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) have suggested a typology of schemas according to the content:

i. Formal schema – refers to the 'background knowledge of the formal, rhetorical organisational structures of different types of texts' (*ibid*., p. 79). Different genres of texts have different forms and associated conventions, which readers learn to identify with experience.
ii. Content schema – refers to 'background knowledge of the content area of the text' (*ibid.*, p. 80). This usually involves conceptual knowledge of certain topics and the possible characteristics that relate to each other in a coherent whole. For example a boy-meets-girl scenario would evoke associations with the initial uncertainty of early romance, falling in love, as well as notions of hurdles in their journey. Content schemas are largely culture specific, hence cultural practices and associations would direct the schemas.
iii. Cultural schema – refers to the reader's own background knowledge of content which interacts with the cultural knowledge presupposed by and implicit in a text. Cultural knowledge, which springs from 'shared experiences, values and attitudes' which Rivers and Temperley (1978, p. 202) call 'socio-cultural meaning'.
iv. Linguistic schema – refers to the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, helping in the basic understanding of the text. Decoding language and the conventions of grammar are essential in comprehension as well as interpretation of the text (Urquhart and Weir 1998, p. 71).

Readers learn schemas as they gain experience through socialisation. At the same time, the more experienced we are as readers, the better we get at recognising and predicting schemas. This links us to the perspective of Reader response theorists like Fish (1980) and Iser (1978) who posit that readers need to fill 'gaps' or the 'blanks' to have a full and deep reading experience. Readers' schemas fill these 'gaps' or 'blanks' prospectively or

retrospectively through the act of 'ideation' (Miall 1995, p 278). Iser uses concepts drawn from phenomenology and Gestalt psychology to refer to the mental processes used to fill in the 'gaps'. According to him there are two types of texts - 'expository texts' and 'fiction texts'. Expository texts refer to a given object, with a specific number of meanings possible which need to be reduced down to make the reference precise, while fiction texts through the many 'blanks', open up a range of interpretive possibilities. To decide which interpretation fits in best, the reader has to make selections based on certain existing schema to predict or 'read forward' into the narrative (Iser 1978, p 184).

Anticipation

Anticipation is a phenomenon that allows readers to predict what is going to happen next in a fictional narrative. In his 1995 study, Miall examines how prospective gap filling, or anticipation in literary response, works during reading particularly focussing on how readers sense a direction of the narrative so that they can predict 'possible future meanings' (Miall 1995, p 277). Miall cites a number of neuropsychological studies that focus on the pre-frontal cortex of the brain (like Damasio 1999). Studies have shown that the pre-frontal cortex is the place in the brain that reacts to different emotion-laden prompts be it through pictures or through written texts. It acts as a 'gating mechanism' and as 'an early filtering system for sensory input' (Knight 1991, as quoted in Miall 1995, p 282). In written literary texts, devices like foregrounding act as affective stimuli, which leads to certain aspects of the text to embed itself in the reader's cognition. Foregrounding is a range of stylistic devices that are linguistic in nature and are a characteristic of literary texts. Devices like assonance, metre, rhyme (phonetic), ellipsis, inversions (grammatical), oxymoron, metaphor (semantic) cause the reader to slow down and disrupt the process of normal and automatic processing, thus the language stands out and draws attention to itself i.e., foregrounds itself (Miall 1995; Mukarovsky 1977; Van Peer 1986). This foregrounding also evokes emotional responses, with readers in several studies rating passages with higher number of devices as 'affectively more intense' (Miall and Kuiken 1994b). Thus readers are sensitive to devices like foregrounding and as a result of processing them, are able to anticipate next words, sentences and events as well as attune themselves to possible future events in the narrative. This ability to anticipate emotions plays a central role in guiding readers' responses to literature.

This suggests that engaging with stories is an activity of the 'feeling' brain whereas analysing the schemas and scripts is the role of the 'thinking' brain. Schema theory and

anticipation work in tandem for generating cognitive responses to and affective engagement with literary texts. Linking back to Reader response, Fish's theory of Affective Stylistics, which he builds upon in his seminal work *Is There a Text in this Class?* (1980), focuses on the syntactical devices used by the author that help readers predict, at times wrongly, the next steps in a story narrative. According to him 'the temporary adoption of these inappropriate strategies' is a part of a successful reading experience where the author deliberately misleads (p. 47). This leads the readers to reassess and change the familiar schema into something unstable and unfamiliar, which is the effect that 'defamilarisation' has (Stockwell 2002, p.79). Miall adds that this power of literature to defamiliarise 'assists readers to reflect and reshape their cultural identity' (1995, p 296). It is one of the many ways that postmodern texts make the narrative unstable, pushing the readers beyond their comfort zone. The reader making unexpected mistakes in meaning making often means success for the author. At the same time, for the reader, it might mean a delicious satisfaction in the reading event, or, at other times, it might lead to frustration at being cheated of the desired feeling that comes out of a favourite scenario being played out. Which bring us to the next question – why *do* we feel so strongly about certain books and characters?

2.1.4 Reader engagement – why do we feel for the characters on the page?

When confronted with pixels or words, we allow ourselves to be guided. Pixels or words on a page are a prop for our make believe.

(Walton 1993, p 54)

Vermeule expands on Walton's idea about pixels and words as 'props' and says:

They take us along for the ride. Now going along for the ride is not a passive affair. To get on board, we have to use our imaginations…imagining under guidance involves the same social-reasoning capacities that ordinary social interactions do.

(Vermeule 2010, p 21)

The underlying question in all enquiries in reader response is – in what ways does reading affect readers, and how does it make us feel the emotions we feel. In the last fifteen years or so, studies in cognitive criticism have examined the adult reader's engagement with fictional character's emotions (Hogan 2011; Keen 2007; Vermeule 2010; Zunshine 2006). These studies argue that through the use of various narrative devices, readers care about and get affected by the fates of literary characters. For example, the reader often reads from the perspective of the central character or the primary consciousness (also known as the focaliser) of a work of fiction, and this leads to greater reader engagement. First person

narration, which gives voice to the 'character's interior consciousness, dilemma and emotional states,' is 'generally used to help readers align sympathetically with the characters' (Stephens 2015, p 28). Neuroscientists attribute this possibility to the human **mirror neuron system** – neurons get activated (fire synapses) both when one acts and when one observes the same action being performed by another. This attribute also extends to fictional representation of an action. Studies primarily based in the USA by neuroscientists like Speer et al., (2007) and Yarkoni et al., (2008) have demonstrated this mirroring in the brain through fMRI scans. In their 2009 publication Speer et al. present evidence that:

> neural systems track changes in the situation described by a story. Different brain regions track different aspects of a story, such as a character's physical location or current goals. *Some of these regions mirror those involved when people perform, imagine, or observe similar real-world activities*. These results support the view that readers understand a story by simulating the events in the story world and updating their simulation when features of that world change. [My emphasis]
>
> (Speer et al. 2009, p 998)

It becomes clear that certain regions of the brain show alertness and response when a person sees someone carrying out an action in real life. The same regions show similar responses when the person sees similar activity in a movie, or through words and pictures. The following, quoted from the same article stands to be crucial in my understanding of language processing in readers' brains:

> When one is viewing a movie, somatosensory and motor cortices increase in activity during scenes showing close-ups of features such as hands and faces (Hasson, Nir, Levy, Fuhrmann ,& Malach, 2004), and the regions involved in perceiving and later remembering auditory and visual information show similar correspondences (Wheeler & Buckner, 2004). Thus, the use of sensory and motor representations during story comprehension may reflect a more general neural mechanism for grounding cognition in real-world experiences.
>
> (Speer et al. 2009, p 998)

These are 'embodied theories of language comprehension' according to which the readers reconstruct situations from 'basic sensory and motor representations' (Barsalou 1999; Glenberg 1997; Zwaan 2004). This concept of brain mirroring is at the core of my understanding of children's engagement with books. From this discussion we can conclude that readers get both affectively as well as cognitively engaged to the characters, which might lead to creating empathy through a moral affective system.

Nikolajeva takes the concept of mirror neurons a step further by problematizing the

concept of **identification**. While reading from the focaliser's point of view leads readers to feel for the character, there is a difference in the intensity with which a reader might engage with the character's emotions. Nikolajeva (2014a, 2014b, 2015) draws a distinction between immersive identification and empathic identification. Immersive identification is when the reader uncritically assumes the fictional character's hopes, fears, feelings and yearnings as their own and unquestioningly supports the actions portrayed in the text. Empathic identification on the other hand, is when the reader is detached from the characters on the page yet can feel their emotions with them. To explain identification and reader engagement further, it is useful to turn to Theory of Mind.

2.1.5 Metacognition, Theory of Mind and Emotion Ekphrasis

The ability to understand 'what another might be wanting, thinking and feeling' or 'social inference' is referred to as Theory of Mind (Mar & Oatley, 2008).

It is a reader's ability to empathise with or read the mind of other people (and not in a mentalist/ paranormal way). In other words, it is the human capacity to attribute mental states to other people based on their actions, reactions, facial expressions, body language etc. (Nikolajeva 2014; Kummerling-Meibauer & Meibauer 2013). Nikolajeva (2012) uses the term 'emotion ekphrasis' to refer to the expression of emotion through words, actions, facial expressions and bodily postures – that is, the embodiment of emotions in life, as well as in texts. Interpreting 'emotion ekphrasis' helps infer someone else's state of emotions. Nikolajeva adopts the term 'ekphrasis' from the art world – meaning describing/expressing one work of art through another means: for example, describing a painting in words or describing the seasons through music. In her essay (2012) she draws a distinction between verbal and visual ekphrasis – emotions expressed through words and pictures in any given text that uses a combination of media. It is a well-documented fact that our brains are primitively wired to understand a picture quicker and with greater impact than words (Heath 2005). Thus, an emoticon with a downturned mouth will have a greater impact and quicker comprehension than the words 'sad' or 'unhappy'.

Cognitive criticism, in this manner, facilitates the mind-reading of a character's emotion ekphrasis, and this competency is referred to as a reader's or a person's (real or fictional) Theory of Mind. To summarise, the tools of first person narration, identification, emotion ekphrasis, and embedded mind reading help the reader understand the emotional status of the book's characters. Therefore, this process, importantly, exercises the reader's Theory of Mind and helps in developing the capability. In three of her recent articles (2012, 2013, 2014)

Nikolajeva has analysed a number of children's picturebooks (such as Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), Hutchin's *Rosie's Walk* (1968) and Tan's *The Lost Thing* (2000)) using Theory of mind and emotion ekphrasis. The analysis demonstrates the way in which the books afford cognitive functions like reading emotions through ekphrasis, higher cognitive emotions, power hierarchies and embedded mind reading.

Developing skills of reading emotions and embedded mind reading also develops metacognition in readers (cognition about cognition – hence the *meta*). Researchers and theorists have been interested in metacognition from a number of perspectives, though Flavell (1979), who is credited with coining the term, originally conceptualised it to include both cognitive and affective states. According to Papaleontiou–Louca's definition, metacognition

> includes not only 'thoughts about thoughts'… but the following processes as well: knowledge of one's own knowledge, processes, and cognitive and affective states; and the ability to consciously and deliberately monitor and regulate one's knowledge, processes, and cognitive and affective states
>
> (Papaleontiou–Louca 2008, p 3).

By this definition, knowledge of affective states' is one of the key awareness that Theory of Mind affords in a reader. Hence, potentially children who are presented with opportunities to exercise skills of interpreting emotions and reading emotion ekphrasis, will also be developing their metacognitive skills. In the Chapter Three, I will be looking at a selection of three books by author and illustrator Emily Gravett, applying Theory of Mind and the concept of emotion ekphrasis to analyse potential responses of young readers. To extend this discussion into a detailed textual analysis of metafictive picturebooks, I will use the tenets of cognitive criticism and Theory of Mind to examine how young readers read these multimodal, complex and heterodoxic texts. I will also analyse the possible effect it has on their affective engagement capacity.

This section started with a review of the evolution of cognitive criticism in children's literature. While discussing the nuances of neurosciences is not within the scope of this study, I have discussed the concepts of anticipation and schema theory that shed light on the cognitive processes utilised during the act of deep reading. Probing further with the question of reader engagement, I discussed how mirror neurons in the brain enhance identification with narrative and characters, which in turn eventually enhances Theory of Mind in an individual. The next section is about picturebook studies with a focus on metafictive picturebooks and their literacy affordances.

2.2 Multimodality, multiliteracies and metafictive picturebooks

As mentioned previously in the introductory chapter, this enquiry is situated in the intersection of the interdisciplinary theories of sociocultural theory as proposed by Vygotsky (1978) and Wertsch (1998) and social semiotic theory of multimodality (proposed by Kress 2010 and previously by the New London Group 1996). I integrate these theories with the previously mentioned cognitive critical studies (Nikolajeva 2014b; Kummerling Meibauer et al. 2013 etc.) to put forward the basis of the structure of the fieldwork and the subsequent analysis in a layered approach. The two theories of sociocultural theory and social semiotics fall under the New Literacy Theories, which I go into later in this section. There are several overlaps in the theories and while I have discussed them separately, they work together to explain the multimodal literacy involved in this inquiry. Next I approach the field of picturebook theory, delving into the different genres of Postmodern, metafictive and Radical Change (Dresang 2008) within picturebooks. I finally end on the notion of imagination, and how extending imagination through picturebooks has the potential to foster empathy and emotional literacy.

2.2.1 Sociocultural theory and multimodality

In the last thirty years, there has been a radical shift in popular media of communication and literacy. Kress remarks on these changing modes:

> Language-as-speech will remain the major mode of communication; language-as-writing will increasingly be displaced by image in many domains of public communication…. The combined effects on writing of the dominance of the mode of image and of the medium of the screen will produce deep changes in the forms and functions of writing. This in turn will have profound effects on human, cognitive/affective, cultural and bodily engagement with the world, and on the forms and shapes of knowledge. *The world told* is different to *the world shown*.
>
> (Kress 2003, p1)

The above prediction made in 2003 holds true to these times. The use of image and visuals around us has only proliferated by leaps and bounds. The reader's response to any text is directly relevant to the mode or medium it was encountered in. Each mode, be it an email, a book, a comic strip, or an online video, determines how the reader responds to the text. The conventions of each medium also regulate how readers interact with the text as well as respond to it. Thus meaning-making is governed to a large extent by a text's representational potential in the different modes and media.

As a growing number of educators come to recognise the importance of using a larger range of texts in education and within the classroom, the concept of multimodality has gained prominence over the last three decades. While specific courses in 'Media studies' have been taught in universities in the UK since the early 1970s, an expanded conception of text and literacy has come to include digital media in more recent years (Bazalgate & Buckingham 2013). The use of multimedia is growing in importance both socially and culturally and the concept of multimodality becomes important in the critical examination of this range of media. Rowsell and Burke (2009) define multimodality 'as an understanding of different modes of communication (linguistic, visual, acoustic, spatial) working together without one being dominant' (p 106). Each mode of communication contributes a different aspect to the meaning, which the others might not offer. Together they create a whole where each element works 'in concert' with the other (ibid., p 107). Put forward by Jewitt (2009), Kress (2010) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), multimodality theory is based broadly on a semiotic approach to include analysis of most forms of communication including verbal and written language, still and moving images, sounds, gestures, use of space etc. From a semiotic point of view, different signs derive their range of meanings from particular social contexts. Iconic signs or representational signs are those where the signifier represents the signified. For example, the iconic sign for a mobile phone could be a picture of one. Though, someone who has never seen a mobile phone might misinterpret what the icon stands for. On the other hand, conventional signs relate to a specific code of understanding agreed by those who have access to that code. For example, those who know the English letters and the way they are put together and read can understand the words 'mobile phone'. They have to be familiar with the concept of the mobile phone to completely relate the verbal conventional sign to meaning and use of the signified. Be it iconic signs, or conventional signs, the visual and verbal levels of communication have to be interpreted in tandem. Their dynamic and particular meanings are specific and relevant to context, social conventions and the verbal language used. While explaining his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky (1978) argued against language being the prime tool in human communication. Other multimodal texts such as visual representations, works of art, drawings, maps, etc. would gain importance as cultural tools for 'shaping and representing cognition' (Vygotsky cited in Miller 2013). With the increase in social mediation there is a greater reliance of the individual on social connectivity. This social connectivity opens up opportunities for collaborative problem solving and completion of activities through group involvement. The new idiom formed by the participants, uses different mediational means (language, pictures, strategies) which,

over time, become cultural tools, accepted as a part of the social multimodal means of communication. Increased use makes these modes (or signs) more embedded in social structures. Learners learn to decode these multimodal texts by using these complex tools of thinking and representing meaning.

Social semiotics

Social semiotics is an extension of the study of signs (semiotics) as they occur in a multimodal and socially constructed world. This speciality branch of semiotics is strongly influenced by the work of Halliday based on linguistic theory (*Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, 1978) and Hodge and Kress further developed the theory in their seminal text *Language as Ideology* (1979, 1993). Their emphasis on language slowly shifted to other semiotic systems paving the way for looking at the world and communication through multiple modes, which was formally put forward by subsequent important publications of *Social Semiotics* (Hodge and Kress 1998) and *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, 2006). Kress argues against "a monomodally conceived world" (2010, p. 27) where the world is represented only through language (written and spoken). The other modes, that is, visual, audio, gestural and spatial, allow a wider range of meaning representations. These multimodal literacies, enhanced by new technologies, pave the way for the "multimodal nature of meaning-making" (Mills 2010, p. 251). Notions of multimodality and multiliteracies are closely intertwined together as explained by Kress (1996), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), Jewitt and Kress (2003).

2.2.2 Multiliteracies

The word 'literacy' has in many ways moved away from its original meaning, which was associated chiefly with reading and writing. In its current social and pedagogical meaning, the word loosely stands for 'competence' or 'skill' (Buckingham 2008, p 75). First used in 1996, the term 'multiliteracies' was coined by the New London Group, a cohort of ten eminent scholars from the field of language, literacy and pedagogy. The term was chosen to reflect the ways in which cultural and linguistic diversity in our radically changing societies was challenging the monolingual culture. The 'plurality of the texts that circulate' in our increasingly multilingual societies, demand that our literacy skills are expanded and extended (New London Group 1996, p 3). The term multiliteracies was also used to challenge the supremacy of the written word and the increasing use of visuals. It denotes the diverse and new forms of communication and media made possible due to a number of

technological advances which has led to a 'burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies' (1996, p 3). The New London Group laid emphasis on how these new skills could be incorporated in future pedagogical practices. This term, due to its fluidity of definition, is current even after 20 years of being coined. Though it might appear that the focus is on making meaning from visual images, according to the authors, the process includes meaning making from six constituent elements mentioned above: linguistic meaning, visual meaning, auditory meaning, gestural meaning and spatial meaning. The sixth and final element is multimodality and making meanings of the first five modes of making meaning from the multimodal patterns (1996, p 65). The use of multiliteracies, as proposed by the New London Group, is related with pedagogy and related to the ways students use them to interpret and create new designs.

While the New London Group situated multiliteracies in a pedagogical space, other scholars have perceived it within the realm of social change and termed it New Literacy or New Literacy Studies (Cope and Kalantzis 2000; Gee 2004; Heath 1984; Pahl and Rowsell 2005). New Literacy Studies (NLS) bring to light questions of dominant literacies versus those that challenge the power equations and are resistant to established hierarchical structures (Street 2003). According to scholars, these emerging forms of literacy are very much a product of the changes in society and thus they need to be seen as a social practice, and not just within the classroom. The term New Literacies therefore now refers to a range of different literacies from literary to digital literacies.

Link with Cognitive criticism: Bringing the discussion back to the current aims, this inquiry explores how reading complex picturebooks might enhance affective engagement in young children. Learning to decode the signs can be linked with the cognitive literary theory detailed in the preceding section. Emotion ekphrasis (Nikolajeva 2012) as explained earlier, is a process of looking and decoding the visual and verbal signs that are available to the reader to read. Keeping in mind Nikolajeva's distinction between verbal and visual ekphrasis, from a multimodal perspective, emotion ekphrasis is reading the visual and verbal signs, indeed, the auditory, spatial as well as the performative signs that the reader sees and has the capacity to decode. Thus I argue that multimodal literacy is essential in the understanding of emotion ekphrasis – the sharper the reader's multimodal literate skills, the more acute their ability to pick up the emotion ekphrasis clues. The emphasis here is on visual literacy, emotional literacy and critical literacy – essential multiliteracies that I aim to incorporate as pedagogical tools in the empirical study. The concept of acquiring and using multiliteracies is central to this enquiry. As argued earlier in the links with Cognitive

literary theory, a well developed sense of visual and emotional literacy would be allow for a better understanding of 'emotion ekphrasis', improving reader engagement with the text, one of the main strands of this inquiry.

2.2.3 Multiliteracies in education – new pedagogical needs and implications

There is an emphasis on verbal/linguistic literacy in our current education system and some scholars have called for changes. According to Serafini, 'the primary focus in contemporary reading education has been on the strategies and skills necessary for understanding written language' (2009, p 10), which is inadequate given the increasingly multimodal nature of communication especially through using the internet and phone applications. Criticising the primacy that linguistic grammar has been given over other semiotic systems, scholars like Serafini (2009) and Anstey and Bull (2009) have called for greater awareness in other semiotic systems, namely linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural and spatial systems. Overall, a person needs to learn and gain competence in these five semiotic systems to be able to successfully communicate in life. Traditionally, our entire initial school and formal education is preoccupied with learning just the first semiotic system – linguistic, involving oral and written vocabulary, generic structure, punctuation, grammar, paragraphing, etc. Body language, vector, foreground, viewpoint, pitch, rhythm, proximity etc., are all aspects of the remaining four systems of communication that we keep learning about more and more throughout our lives. There is an urgent need for new ways of teaching and learning that enhances learners' competence in all of the five semiotic systems. Awareness of these systems and the use of 'reading' other semiotic systems would help tease out much more meaning from the ever-increasing presence of multimodal texts. Modern life widely incorporates a range of new literacy practices and literacies such as electronic and digital texts as well as the traditional paper texts. Thus, multiliterate learners will be better readers/viewers of books as well as be able to make an easier transition between print and digital media which in turn will, according to Anstey and Bull, equip them with essential communication skills to navigate with in life (2009).

2.2.4 Visual Literacy

Today's society is seeing a huge proliferation of the visual image. Millennial learners are referred to as 'digital natives' who 'are more visually literate than other cohorts' (Coates 2006, p 126). The concept of visual literacy is used in relation to several interlinked disciplines like art and design, psychology, media studies and technology. Averginou (2012) suggests that the definition of visual literacy varies according to the persuasion of

the expert defining it. In their 1994 book, *Visual Literacy: A Spectrum of Visual Learning*, Moore and Dwyer included a chapter titled "Visual Literacy: The Definition Problem" (Seels 1994) wherein they elaborated the tensions surrounding the concept between different disciplines which prevented the formulation of a definition that experts agreed upon. While there is no agreed definition, there is general consensus that the term was coined in 1969 by Debes, who put forward the following definition of visual literacy:

> Visual Literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication."
>
> (Debes 1969, p 27)

Debes' definition, even though put forward in 1969, is relevant even today and is frequently quoted, with the International Visual Literacy Association, which was co-founded by Debes, using his definition as their official approach. Since this first definition, researchers and practitioners have proposed ever more complex definitions that reflect the breadth of its applications in keeping with the view that visual literacy is 'eclectic in origin. Other early theorists have explored the syntax of visual language and have concluded that 'the code of visual language is chaotic' (Turbayne 1970, p 24) and that 'visual literacy cannot ever be a clear cut logical system similar to language' (Dondis 1973, p 12). However, both Turbayne and Dondis agree that the codes of visual literacy can be taught to human beings so they can 'see' better.

In 1996, the publication of *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* saw Kress and van Leeuwen put forward the notions of 'old visual literacy' and 'new visual literacy'. According to them 'old visual literacy' is one in which 'visual communication has been made subservient to language and in which images have come to be regarded as unstructured replicas of reality'; and 'new visual literacy' in contrast is 'in which (spoken) language exists side by side with, and independent of, forms of visual representation which are openly structured, rather than viewed as more or less faithful duplicates of reality (2006, p 23). They look at the 'old' and the 'new' kinds of literacies as historical and cultural alternatives mentioning in the second edition of their seminal book (2006) that society was poised to make a shift from the old to the new with the increased use of multiple media and

literacies. Their book is ground breaking in providing a detailed framework for critical analysis of visuals. More recently, Kress (2010) draws attention to the fact that print and visual images need not be separately read or separately composed but combine in a single multimodal communicative form. This notion will be crucial for my textual analysis in the next chapter as well as in the later 'Findings' chapters (Five, Six and Seven) where I analyse the children's responses to the selected multimodal texts.

In the absence of a consensus, I return to the broad definition of visual literacy as the "ability to understand, interpret and evaluate visual messages" (Bristor and Drake 1994). While these critics emphasise understanding and interpreting visual texts, others like Brumberger (2011) and Yeh and Cheng (2010) consider that a visually literate a person ought to demonstrate an ability to respond through and reproduce visual images too. My conception of visual literacy for the purpose of this study is informed by a combination of the above stances of understanding, interpreting, enjoying and reproducing visual messages to demonstrate competent visual literacy skills.

2.2.5 Picturebooks

As mentioned earlier, there have been calls for new ways of teaching literacy that go beyond the traditional emphasis on the 3 Rs. With images and visuals gaining much more prominence in the new social modes of communication, there is an increased need for seeking new solutions for teaching visual literacy both inside and out of the classroom walls. Scholars like Anstey and Bull (2006), Serafini (2015) and Arizpe and Styles (2016) have asserted the importance of visual literacy in fostering creative and critical thinking skills among children. They go further to emphasise that postmodern and metafictive texts are appropriate in redressing the balance in favour of multiliteracies. This is where picturebook studies come into their own. These texts call for an awareness of, and offer spaces to practice and acquire a certain degree of expertise in visual, gestural, audio and spatial semiotic systems.

Picturebook studies is one of the fastest growing speciality areas of children's literature, especially since the 1980s, with scholars gaining keen insights about the potential it offers learners in the classroom. Originally considered appropriate for the instruction and amusement of very young learners, picturebooks are now acknowledged as a sophisticated, multimodal art form with the potential for engaging audiences of all ages (Arizpe 2009). Their potential for developing reading as well as critical literacy skills and for extending creativity through writing, art and drama, has also been recognised (e.g. Arizpe 2009;

Arizpe and Styles 2016; Kiefer 1995; Pantaleo 2008a; Sipe 2008;). There are a number of definitions of what a picturebook is but many scholars consider Barbara Bader's definition in *American Picturebooks: From Noah's Ark to the Beast Within* (1976) to be a relevant and comprehensive starting point. According to Bader:

> A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and, foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning of the page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.
>
> (Bader cited Lewis 2001, p 1).

This 'interdependence of pictures and words' is the space where all the drama lies in the picturebook reading experience. While Bader refers to the phenomenon as interdependence, Lewis refers to this as 'mutual interanimation' (Lewis 2001). The same phenomenon is referred to as 'synergy' by Sipe (1998, 1999) between the words and the pictures which gives rise to dynamic relations between the verbal and the visual elements. The theme of synergy is a strong connection between the cognitive theory and multimodal lenses of looking. Often this dynamic leads to tensions in the meaning accrued from the different elements: some picturebooks have words that do not describe the visuals accurately and visuals that do not support the written text. Whereas in traditional texts the printed words have dominance of the pictures, where the visual elements are supportive to the main and monolithic narrative of the words, modern picturebooks often pull at the meaning created in different directions. The 'simultaneous display of the facing pages' that Bader refers to often creates tension and 'counterpoint' (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001). The words and images provide alternative information thus creating gaps, which the readers are expected to notice and fill for a rich and satisfying reading experience. Unlike traditional picturebooks, which have 'readerly' (Barthes 1970) descriptive or 'decorative' visuals (Nikolajeva 2002) which support the linear, and more important, verbal narrative, these sophisticated picturebooks create interactive 'writerly' 'gaps' (Iser 1978) challenging the reader to fill using their own individual past experiences and knowledge. Since individual meaning-making processes differ from person to person, the interpretive possibilities of picturebooks can indeed feel 'limitless' as suggested by Bader above. These 'writerly' gaps can be filled by the reader's internal schemas, a concept I discuss in the preceding section. Readers make internal connections based on the pre-existing schemas but often, complex texts with 'writerly' gaps make them rearrange the existing schemas to accommodate new information.

It is the complex and ironic interplay between the verbal and the visual (Nodelman 1990) in picturebooks that makes them the ideal vehicles for creating greater awareness of visual literacy in readers of all ages (c.f. Arizpe & Styles 2016; Pantaleo 2008b; Sipe 2008; Sipe & McGuire 2008 etc.).

2.2.6 Postmodern picturebooks and multimodality

As discussed earlier in the section, readers in an evolving multimodal world are meeting a growing range of sophisticated text types (New London Group 1996). Therefore, it is important to provide young readers with a broad range of texts that can increase their repertoire of understanding different ways of storytelling and narratives (Pantaleo 2011). The phenomenon of postmodernity has deeply influenced the picturebook genre. Postmodern picturebooks are known to challenge the reader's understanding of what picturebooks are. Much has been written on the emerging trends in postmodern picturebooks with their metafictive, intertextual, fragmented, self-conscious and self-reflexive nature (Lewis 2001, Arizpe and Styles 2016; Arizpe et al. 2008, Anstey and Bull 2004, 2009, Sipe 2008, Pantaleo 2007, Sipe and McGuire 2008). Here is a list of some common devices used by authors and/or illustrators according to Anstey (2008):

- Non-traditional ways of using plot, character, and setting, mixing or drawing upon multiple genres
- Unusual use of narrator's voice to position the reader/viewer
- Indeterminacy in written or illustrative text, plot, character or setting
- A pastiche of illustrative styles
- Unusual book formats and layouts
- Contesting discourses (between illustrative and written text)
- Intertextuality
- The availability of multiple readings and meanings for a variety of audiences

In our modern day societies, children are coming face to face with multimodal books and new literacies required for using mobile phone, tablets, computers etc. (digital literacies). These all too common yet complex influences impact the skills of literacy acquisition in young children. Especially for younger readers, living in a multimodal and multi-literate

world like ours, multiliteracy experiences come into play in their reading (Carrington and Luke 2002). Picturebooks offer children the tradition spaces to explore the synergy between the visual and the verbal. As mentioned in the previous section, developments in picturebook publishing, new innovative styles of visual art and the technological advancements in paper engineering have brought on a new era with a plethora of astounding titles which children can choose from (Arizpe 2017). The genre of metafictive postmodern picturebooks offers readers titles that are, more often than not, artefacts that require 'tactile engagement' (Arizpe et al., 2008) – objects of art, with holes to peep through, textures of pages, fonts and graffiti-styled art and craftwork that invite touching, listening and pointing: 'an artefact to be handled and manipulated and read'. In most instances, these are books, yet upon exploration they are as engaging and playful as three-dimensional toys.

A number of scholars have explored the multimodal affordances of postmodern picturebooks with children (for example Sipe 2008, Sipe & Pantaleo 2008, Serafini 2005). They all agree in their findings in that picturebooks with such multimodal affordances are beneficial to modern day readers. As per Lewis, 'the picturebook is thus ideally suited to the task of absorbing, reinterpreting and re-presenting the world to an audience for whom negotiating newness is a daily task' (2001, p 137).

2.2.7 A question of labels

While the adjective 'postmodern' is an accessible term to describe a certain kind of picturebook [some prominent characteristics have been mentioned above], in a wider context, 'postmodernism' is a social, cultural and academic movement that is firmly rooted in history. Scholars such as Nikolajeva have contested the blanket use of the term postmodern, which they consider dated and heavy. She calls it a 'worn-out' label and prefers the term 'complex' picturebooks, which refers to the multiple sophisticated features that set these apart from other texts in the picturebook genre (Nikolajeva 2014a). In addition, a term like 'complex' does not identify the picturebook phenomenon with a particular historical and cultural movement but can be used irrespective of a book's historical chronology. A similar movement is denoted by Radical Change, a theory proposed by Dresang in 1999, which refers to the impact of the changes brought about by the digitalisation of the world around us. In fact, Dresang drops the 'postmodern' label and adopts the term 'digital' to describe a number of characteristics features of texts, irrespective of whether they are software/online based or print based. I find Radical Change Theory useful in explaining the current digital literacies and will discuss it later in

the chapter. To circumvent this confusion among picturebook labels which might either pin the phenomenon of the text down to a historical tradition or fix it to a particular mode and thus rob it of its essential fluidity and plurality, I will use the term metafiction (n.) and metafictive (adj.) to describe my selected texts for the purposes of this thesis.

The term metafiction refers to the literary devices that are used in texts that make them seem postmodern, but without the associated baggage of attributing a time and space to the publication. While some scholars have used the term interchangeably with 'postmodernist' (for example Serafini 2015), others have listed several distinctions that separate from what are considered postmodern features. Metafictive texts highlight 'constructedness' of the books as artefacts, meaning, the 'self referentiality' of a work of literature, foregrounding the internal workings of the text, foiling expectations from the text and drawing attention to the 'self-conscious' artificiality of the text (Waugh 1984). Thus while I am aware of the many distinctions and debates between the labels, for this thesis, I will use the term 'metafictive' to refer to the most prominent and relevant features of the selected picturebooks.

2.2.8 Metafictive picturebooks, the imagination and 'reading path'

Hall (2008) makes a case for the need to spur on the imagination of young readers through exploring complex picturebooks that challenge and get them to question accepted norms. These books are known to have a viewpoint (often the perspective of the central character through whose eyes we see the action) that often puts the reader up-close and involved with the action in the pages. When the reader opens the doublespread, they can interact with the action, they are already a part of the narrative twists and turns. Opening a book like *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book* or *Traction Man* offers 'direct engagement with imaginative play rather than advocacy of it' (ibid., p 137). Hall calls it the 'deep commitment to the imaginative enterprise' (ibid., p 139). In fact it has been argued that metafictive picturebooks offer the possibilities of 'slippage' between the real and the imagined, just like the fantastic in fiction as theorised by Todorov (1975). In fantasy fiction where the unexplained and the magical are interlayered with everyday realities, these complex texts afford a similar potential where the factual and the fictitious are interchangeable and blurred (Marsh 2005).

The prevalence of the modes of writing and speaking has resulted in the notion of imagination as 'receiving ordered structures, the elements of which need to be filled with our meanings' (Kress 2003, p 152). This is a similar concept to the 'schema', which is

about anticipation and predicting in a narrative, that Stephens (2011) uses in relation to cognitive criticism, something I discussed in the previous section. This leads the reader to access pre-existing patterns in an inward space for imagination, where the reader tries to 'develop a landscape or world' which Hall refers to as a more literary view of imagination (2008, p 144). Mackey refers to the traditional idea of books and literature as a 'window' through which, when reading the words and using their own imagination, the readers look onto this made up world and savour the 'mentally vivified encounter with the characters and the events of the story' (2008, p 105).

A term that plays a central role in multimodal theory is 'reading path'. This refers to the arc or the 'path' taken by the reader to negotiate a text (printed or digital). Kress notes that the reading path of printed texts is well laid-out, and the trajectory is linear. With digital texts, or with texts that afford digital features, the path is not set. The composition of a webpage, or that of a spread in a postmodern complex text, is such that one does not know where the reader is going to look first, or where the reader is going to go next. The path is indeterminate, and needs to be constructed by the reader. There is no set starting point, neither is there a set end point.

The increasing dependence on the visual mode, however, means 'working with more open, less easily identifiable reading paths' (Hall 2008, p 144), where the images are representational entities and have a number of meanings associated with them. The imagination has to actively engage with this representational world to negotiate a number of meaning paths, which are much loosely held, compared to the 'ordered structures' of writing and reading Kress refers to earlier. Picturebooks that rely on illustration to *support* the narrative led by the written text draw the reader into an inner literary world of imagination. Postmodern picturebooks, which have a more complex dynamic between images and words, challenge the readers to engage in a more active imagination, prompting them to engage in active meaning making from a comparatively 'loosely ordered design' (ibid., p 145). Features in postmodern picturebooks like boundary breaking, indeterminacy, excess, parody and interactivity, as defined by Lewis (2001) and other scholars like Sipe and Pantaleo (2008) and Anstey (2008) rely heavily on the visuals to get the desired impact. Through the use of the images and words in unconventional and surprising design, the reader is catapulted straight into the narrative where 'fantasy and reality coexist', where they own the narrative, experience the protagonist's plight and state of mind, and often decide the future course of action.

2.2.9 Paper books that do more…

…than traditional picturebooks.

The complex metafictive picturebooks, with their range of affordances, seem to have the potential to form an excellent middle ground, chalking a space between traditional print-based books and the texts available on diverse technological platforms. It has been argued that postmodern multimodal books extend young readers' understanding of what paper books can do. Nearly 30 years ago Meek published her influential article *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn* (1988) where she explains how readers learn from books - including the difference between varying formats of books like picturebooks and the chapter books. At that time the book was predominantly the only literary and textual form available to young readers. In the last three decades there has been a revolution in the textual formats available as well as an explosion in the many platforms available to children to exercise their literacy skills. Children in these digitised times are surrounded by multifaceted texts many of which are unstable, notably digital games and apps. Mackey observes that '[w]e now live in a new era of multiple systems of recorded symbolic representation, readily accessible to many of even the youngest readers' (2003, p. 592), as devices such as e-readers and tablet computers are extensively used for a wide range of purposes by people of all ages in the Western world and beyond. These 'recorded symbolic representations' take many diverse forms. Traditional print books are given new avatars in the form of audiobooks, e-books, enhanced e-books or video books, as well as a burgeoning range of story-based apps for children. These new modes of storytelling, of course, have a big impact on the 'structural and aesthetic idiosyncrasies on children's fiction' as Warnecke puts it, especially in the print format (2016, p 108).

In her 2011 publication titled *Narrative Pleasures in Young Adult Novels, Films and Video Games*, Mackey acknowledges the growing concerns of parents and educators about the possible negative impact the new technologies and formats have on the reading habits of children. She says that 'the values of print have not been overturned or replaced but they are in the process of being augmented' (p 99). She highlights the urgent need to reassess our own understanding of reading and readers in the digital age. These new age texts, which Mackey describes as 'multifaceted performance space and thinking space' (ibid.) engage the reader with the narrative in innovative ways.

Many contemporary digital games put players 'inside' game systems, which makes engaging with these dynamic game formats addictive to young children (Skoric, Teo &

Neo 2009; Liu 2011). The selected books that I refer to in this study, which are a sampling from a range of available books, often replicate this 'launching into action'. These multimodal, metafictive books are excellent examples of the exciting range of things a picturebook can *be* or *do*. The imagination is engaged, actively and outwardly, offering the readers agency, which is what they often find in a number of online apps and digital games, and which most traditional picturebooks with their static formats, are unable to offer.

2.2.10 Radical Change Theory in a 'net savvy' world: Digital characteristics, materiality and haptic engagement

This concept of 'outwardly' and 'active' imagination is echoed by the concept of interactivity that Dresang expounds in her Radical Change Theory (RCT) (1999). Coming about a decade after Meek's seminal article, (*How Texts Teach What Readers Learn* 1988), Dresang reflects on the multimodal turn in reading materials and literacy practices that she observed in the early-to-mid nineties. What makes Radical Change Theory particularly suited to Children's Literature is that Dresang focuses on the changes that are brought about in the 'net savvy' world. A historical movement like postmodernism, Radical Change Theory gives us an 'overarching, congruent explanation' for the fundamental changes taking place in contemporary children's literature, the highlights being *connectivity*, *interactivity* and *access* in a digital world. The following are the three important features of Radical Change texts:

- **Interactivity** refers to dynamic, user-initiated, nonlinear, nonsequential, complex cognitive, emotional, and physical behaviors and relationships with and among components of literature.
- **Connectivity** refers to the sense of community or construction of social worlds that emerge from changing perspectives and expanded associations in the real world or in literature.
- **Access** refers to the breaking of long-standing information barriers, bringing entrée to a wide diversity of formerly largely inaccessible opinion and opportunity in society and sophistication in literature.' (Dresang 2008, p 40)

Dresang calls ours a digital age – 'a societal landscape that has gradually emerged as computers have become more commonplace and as the Internet has become a locale where children can learn and play'. Lest we think of it being limited to an online world, Dresang further explains, 'Digital refers not only to the media themselves but also to the interactive, connective qualities they possess, which seem to have permeated much of society'

(Dresang 1999, p 6). The interactive and connective aspects of media are stronger than ever before now, and the impact is evident in the picturebooks and picturebook apps. A number of recent picturebooks, which are considered metafictive or postmodern, demonstrate several Radical Change features, like non-linear organisation, non-sequential and interactive format of text, and multiple layers of meanings.

Other Radical Change features, which also overlap with metafictive features, include multiple perspectives and unresolved endings. These features make it difficult to provide a straightforward description of the text. When the reader opens a page that does not have a clear left to right progression on the page, it defies reader expectation of linearity. There are flaps and openings and cut outs and pasted scraps of paper. Most of these scraps of paper, some of which are stuck upside down or in a reverse manner, have text on them. To try and read the writing on it, the reader has to turn the book upside down or tilt their head. Once the reader is engrossed in reading, say, the small font of the flap of graffiti or the scrap of an advertisement, they have broken away from the larger narrative on the spread. They have entered a sub-narrative, often an intertextual world, opening up avenues to other stories and parallel worlds. This is the non-linear and non-sequential nature of these books and it is reminiscent of online texts, which are full of hypertext links. As soon as we click one link we are taken once removed from the original story, and the more links we click, more worlds of different texts open up. Familiarity with the surprising and disruptive capabilities of this sort of paper books increases the narrative repertoire (Serafini 2015) of readers. Meek (1988) has suggested that it would benefit readers to 'tolerate uncertainty' and these books extend readers' tolerance to narrative ambiguity. Linking this back to Hall's approval of 'less easily identifiable reading paths' (2008, p 144) these books support the 'imaginative enterprise' (*ibid.*). Viewed from the Kress and Van Leeuwen's social semiotic lens which was discussed earlier, the complexity offered through unpredictable reading paths and the dependence on the visual mode, these books offer affordances to increase the visual and digital literacy of readers who are supported in their explorations. For the purposes of this thesis, I will use the term 'Radical Change' to refer to the digital characteristics and interactivity afforded by the metafictive picturebooks I have selected for this study.

There are a number of studies that examine the effect that reading e-texts and other such digital story formats has on children (Mangen 2008, Hateley 2013). These studies speak of the haptic engagement ('haptic' (*Latin*) related to the movement of hands) that these texts afford and benefits to cognition and hand-eye coordination that such engagement aids. The

postmodern texts that I am examining also afford similar levels of engagement and immersion. The physical shape and nature of texts, or materiality, is totally bound to the narrative of texts that are postmodern in nature. Materiality is one of the digital characteristics of postmodern texts, or the Radical Change features, as Dresang calls them. (As mentioned earlier, I will refer to the texts as metafictive unless I refer to the digital affordances of the texts). Kress advocated the benefits of texts that bring to attention their multimodal physicality:

> Forms of imagination are inseparable from the material characteristics of modes, from their shaping in a society's history, and from their consequent interaction with the sensoriness, the sensuousness, of our bodies. Introducing a concern with materiality and the senses into representation brings the longstanding separation in Western thinking of mind and body into severe question, and therefore challenges the reification and consequent separation of cognition, affect and emotion.
>
> (Kress 2003, p 171).

The notion that imagination is fostered not just through the mind but also through haptic engagement is asserted by Kress. Thus the materiality of postmodern, metafictive texts is yet another reason that helps young readers become better at using their imagination and the 'launching into action' mentioned earlier.

Summary and moving forward

This section of the chapter has located this research enquiry at the juncture of sociocultural theory, multimodality, social semiotics and multiliteracies. Exploring the need for multiliteracies in the modern digital world, I underscored the need for enhanced visual literacy in readers, with a particular focus on young readers. Children's literature, in particular picturebook studies provide an accessible entry-point to acquiring multiliteracies. The rest of the section focused on the genre of picturebooks, particularly those demonstrating postmodern, metafictive and radical change features. I argue that these picturebooks challenge the readers to use a variety of reading paths and engage schemas and scripts in creative ways thus maximising the possibility for developing children's imagination. Interacting with these picturebooks offers the scope for cognitive and affective engagement at multiple levels affording awareness of readers' own theory of mind.

The next section will delve into bilinguality in emergent readers and detail picturebook studies used to enhance linguistic competency in children. The section will link finally to

emotional literacy affordances in metafictive picturebooks and how they might support the research aims of this enquiry.

2.3 Bilingual children and picturebooks

This final section of the literature review approaches the central issue of this study from the perspective of language abilities of bilingual children. Given the aim of this study to investigate the role of metafictive picturebooks in enhancing different literacy skills of bilingual children, I will start with the phenomenon of bilingualism and what it means to be 'emergent'. Then I will move on to how recent picturebook studies have used reader response practices with children who have different language and cultural backgrounds. Finally, I raise questions around how bilingual children engage with emotions in their first language and how cognitive criticism and theory of mind might increase the potential of emotional engagement in young children.

2.3.1 What is bilingualism?

According to estimates from various sources (example, Ansaldo et al. 2008), 43% to 52% of the world's population speaks two languages. Specific regions have their own estimates, for instance the number of bilingual speakers in the US has increased from 11% in the 1980s to nearly 20% in 2012 (Grosjean 2012, online). According to a survey conducted by the European commission in 2012, 'just over half of all Europeans (54%) claim to speak at least one other language in addition to their mother tongue' (p 12). The report says that 'there are 23 officially recognised languages, more than 60 indigenous regional and minority languages, and many non-indigenous languages spoken by migrant communities' (p 2). According to this report, even though English is the most widely spoken foreign language in Europe, the UK is one of those countries where respondents are least likely to speak any foreign language (61%) at all. The national statistics for the UK show that in excess of 360 languages are spoken in schools in the UK, taking into account the non-indigenous languages spoken with the figure in Scotland being 149 (NALDIC online).

The controversy over the exact number of bilingual individuals reflects the lack of consensus over definitions of bilingualism itself. According to Grosjean:

> Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives (2010, p 4).

Further defining the concept, he specifies that the use of two languages has to be regular, irrespective of the fluency. Second, he includes the use of dialects, not just languages. And third, for the sake of simplicity and inclusivity, this definition proposed by him includes individuals who speak more than two languages, who are sometimes referred to as 'multilingual' by other experts. Language cannot be of course divorced from the context it

is used in. According to Baker (2011), this definition by Grosjean takes into consideration the use and bilingual ability of the individual. The use of two languages, in most cases, changes according to the change in contexts. Baker calls this 'functional bilingualism' (2011, p 5) which notes that people change the way they speak depending on whom they speak with (the target) and contexts and platforms they communicate in (the domains). Baker explains with the following examples in a tabular form:

Example of language targets	**Examples of language contexts (domains)**
1. Nuclear family	1. Shopping
2. Extended family	2. Visual and auditory media (e.g. TV, radio, DVD)
3. Work colleagues	3. Printed media (e.g. newspapers, books)
4. Friends	4. Cinema/discos/theatre/concerts
5. Neighbours	5. Work
6. Religious leaders	6. Correspondence/ email/ telephone/ official communication
7. Teachers	7. Clubs, societies, organisations, sporting activities
8. Presidents, Principals, other leaders	8. Leisure and hobbies
9. Bureaucrats	9. Religious meetings
10. Local community	10. Information and communication technology (e.g. internet, phones)

Table 2. 1 ***Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*****, Adapted from Baker, 2011, p 5.**

With every change in target and domain, on their own or in combination, the manner of language used and the tone, changes. This notion of functional bilingualism however, presupposes language choice as well as ability. An individual will change his/her language or register if they are *able* to change, if they have the language competency to do so.

This brings me to the notion of competency or proficiency. Grasp over two language systems means an individual's capabilities in receptive and productive skills. As the following table illustrates, receptive ability means the oracy skills of listening and reading, and productive ability entails the literacy skills of speaking and writing in any given language.

	Oracy	**Literacy**
Receptive Skills	Listening/Understanding	Reading
Productive Skills	Speaking	Writing

Table 2. 2 ***Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*****, Adapted from Baker 2011, p 7.**

So, bilingual competency means the combination of any of these skills over two language systems. Some speak a language but do not write it, others are able to read and write it (having studied it for academic reasons or tourism purposes) but have very little oral capability. There can be further distinctions made based on the sub-skills of style, register, pronunciation, accent, dialects (as per Grosjean's definition) etc. It transpires that the degree of control and facility over one language, or two, or three will decide if a person is monolingual, bilingual or multilingual. However, deciding whether someone is bilingual or multilingual needs certain value judgements, based on what yardstick is being applied. For example, whereas Grosjean's more recent definition emphasises the regular use of two languages regardless of fluency, Bloomfield's early studies (1933) defined bilingualism conservatively as 'native-like control over two more languages.' This seems too extreme and leaves us to wonder what is 'native-like' and reminds us that this term has been problematized in other contexts. This view is considered a 'maximalist' view (Baker 2011) where the speaker is expected to have a high degree of facility over two languages. On the other end of the spectrum is a minimalist approach, for example Diebold's (1964) concept of incipient bilingualism. This allows people with very little competence in a second language to be accepted under the category of bilinguals, for instance, tourists. This is considered another extreme view and not entirely reliable as a guiding rule to decide who is bilingual and who is not. This discussion highlights the fact that notion of bilingualism is problematic with definitions which can be elastic, sometimes inclusive and at other times exclusivist.

According to Hakuta (1990) and Grosjean (1997), proficiency in two languages can be explained through the language continuum, which spans from being a monolingual with very minimum skills in another language on one end to being bilingual at the other. This continuum charts a range from 'native-like' fluency, which Bloomfield had stipulated in his definition, to having minimal skills, as suggested by Diebold's notion of incipient bilingualism. This is this what the argument in this thesis aims towards, a view that sees bilingualism as existing on a continuum.

2.3.1.1 Types of bilingualism

The concept of bilingualism itself can be further refined into several types, with the meaning changing slightly from one expert to another. One such distinction is simultaneous and sequential bilingualism. Sequential bilingual acquisition is a process that occurs when one language is introduced to the learner after the first. In that, the first language is established and the speaker has a degree of competence in it, before they are exposed to the second language. However, since there are several criteria that decide if a language is 'established', most childhood bilingualism researchers follow the convention that 'children who are exposed to a second language only after the age of three are said to be engaged in sequential bilingualism' (Goodz 1994). Researchers like Hakuta (1986), McLaughlin (1984), Vaid (1986) etc., have based their studies on this premise of sequential bilingualism.

Another distinction is 'additive' and 'subtractive' bilingualism (Lambert 1987) where additive refers to a new language ability being developed in addition to another and there is no threat to the first language. Subtractive bilingualism, on the other hand, is usually used when the new language is learnt at the expense of the first language, most likely a minority language in the given context. For example Asian families moving to the UK sometimes experience that 'school depreciates the home language and strongly promotes the dominant language of school and society – English' (Baker 2011, p xxii).

According to Baker (2011) the most perfect attribute in individual bilingualism, a term that refers to an individual's competency with language as opposed to a whole community's, is the notion of balanced bilingualism. As the term suggests, a balanced bilingual is someone who is approximately equally fluent in two languages. As illustrated in the following figure, bilinguals exist in a continuum where A and B are the two languages.

Figure 2. 1 Illustration: Of a balanced bilingual adapted from Colin Baker's *Foundations of Bilingualism*.

The central zone in this continuum, where the sizes of both A and B are similar, suggests equal or comparable ability in both languages, which is considered an ideal 'balanced' state. Though in most cases the reality is that bilinguals use the different languages in different situations and contexts with varying degrees of proficiency.

Theorists like Grosjean (1989, 2010), Cook (1992, 2002) and Jessner (2008) have argued for a move away from very strict dichotomous definitions, towards a holistic view of bilingualism, as is evident from Grosjean's 2010 definition quoted at the start of the chapter. This view promotes the notion that a bilingual speaker is 'not two monolinguals in one person' with a perfect grasp over two languages (Grosjean 1989). Instead, they have their 'own unique linguistic profile' (Baker 2011, p 9) which enables them to use two (or more) languages for different purposes with varying ease in their daily lives. Bilinguals are considered to be individuals with multicompetencies, possessing 'hybrid and multi-faceted linguistic repertoires' who negotiate different identities effectively through the use of more than one language (Valdés et al 2015, p 59). This is in keeping, also, with notions of translanguaging and translingualism put forward by Garcia and Wei (2014) and Blackledge and Creese (2010), which emphasise the fluidity and interrelatedness of languages, rather than being entities that can be considered as separate and distinct from each other.

In this study, when I use the term bilingual, it is with the awareness that an individual's use of languages in the community does not adhere to watertight separation between domains and targets. The term bilingual here acknowledges the fact that children who are believed to be bilingual might be in contact with, and have varying degrees of fluency in more than two languages. Thus emergent bilinguals (a term I explain in the following section) in the classroom and school setting must be treated as bilinguals and not expected to leave their home languages and cultures outside the school gates.

2.3.1.2 Emergent bilinguals

The term 'emergent' was put forward by Garcia in 'From English Language Learners to Emergent Bilinguals' (Garcia, Kliefgen & Falchi 2008) in a bid to change attitudes surrounding teaching English to speakers of other languages. This refers back to the inequity between EAL learners and monolinguals, and the hegemony of English in a dominant English speaking culture in the Western world I mentioned in my introductory chapter. Garcia called for a shift from existing terms that describe bilingual students such as English language learners, students with 'limited English proficiency' (LEPs) or English as a second language (ESL), which are largely based on a deficit model. Emergent bilinguals are dynamic bilinguals whose linguistic repertoires tap both into their native language as well as a second language (which in this case is English). Writing about the status of new English learners in the United States, Garcia and Kliefgen refer to the policy

makers who use terms like ELL (English Language Learners), LEPs, ESL etc., which privilege the English language:

> When officials and educators ignore the bilingualism that these students can and must develop through schooling in the United States, they perpetuate inequities in the education of these children. That is, they discount the home languages and cultural understandings of these children and assume that their educational needs are the same as the monolingual child.
>
> (Garcia & Kliefgen 2010, p 2)

Notions of equity are very closely associated with this concept. And while Garcia advocates use of the term 'emergent bilingual' for the education and legal contexts in the United States of America, the reasons are applicable for all countries that are largely monolingual like the UK and Australia. According to Garcia and Kliefgen the term emergent bilinguals '. . . recognizes the value of the students' home languages as resources for learning and as markers of their identity as individuals who have creative ways of knowing, being, and communicating' (2010, p 119). In fact it privileges the ability of being bilingual over monolingual.

Garcia's term 'emergent' does not refer to the age of the learner, only the fact that they have access to a language other than English, and that they are learning the English language. For this study however, 'emergent' bilingual is also useful in referring to the young ages of the children who are newly acquiring a language. Since my enquiry will be investigating responses of children who have just started school, they are emergent learners in as they are new to the system of academic study. In Scotland, for example, children start school when they are 5 years of age (the 3-5 years nursery provision is optional). In many cases, this is their first introduction to a formal system of education. This is also the first time they enter into an all-English environment for an extended duration of 6 hours per day. In Scotland the preferred term to refer to children who have a different home language is English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners. The term 'home language' is also described as the 'native language' earlier in this section, and is often referred to by several other terms such as the learners' first language (L1), mother tongue, dominant language or heritage language etc. These labels have their own stories of genesis and come from different schools of thought. But they have one thing in common; these terms tend to suggest that the learners are more proficient in their first/other/home language than in English. However, given the young ages of the learners it is safe to assume that their grasp of any language is far from expert. So, they learn the two languages simultaneously, often in tandem (Cummins 2005).

2.3.2 Emergent literacy in Early Childhood Education

2.3.2.1 Linguistic development in children

Linguistic development or language development, is a process that starts early in human life. This instinctive mental ability, which enables an infant to understand language as well as speak it (in their own ways), has been an area of interest for linguists and developmental psychologists alike. In theoretical terms there are four major perspectives have been put forward by leading theorists:

Nativist – put forward by Chomsky in the 1960s, this theory states that infants are born with an innate sense of grammar, which predisposes them towards learning a language quickly and instinctively. Nature is prioritised in this theory where the mechanism for acquiring syntax is effective, regardless of any culture and society.

Cognitive Developmental – Similar to the nativist theory, this theory initially put forward by Piaget believes that nature is most crucial in language development. However, rather than having specific in-born mechanisms, language development occurs according to stages of cognitive development. According to Piaget, 'language appears when one has the ability to represent symbols in the mind' (Otto 2010).

Behaviourist – According to Skinner's behaviourist theory language is learned through various experiences that receive reinforcement. Thus this theory prioritises nurture and positive reinforcements in learning a language as opposed to the importance of nature in nativist and cognitive developmental perspectives.

Interactionist – This theory proposed by Vygotsky asserts that language is acquired through social interaction. Similar to the behaviourist theory, this perspective prioritises the role of nurture in language development. The key difference however is that social interaction and environmental factors are believed to govern language acquisition. The structures of societal and cultural norms that are a part of the community impact the learning behaviour and develop the patterns of language knowledge.

This study leans towards Vygotsky's social constructivist nature of learning and acquiring knowledge through social structures. While the study of language acquisition is not the main aim of this inquiry, I ascribe to the Vygotskian school of thought where I am

conscious that language acquisition will occur as part of the dynamics of the Literature Circles which I explain more in my chapter on methodology (Chapter Four).

As explained in the earlier section this study focuses on bilingual learners. Thus we are not looking at just one language acquisition, we are concerned with two languages and how both languages feature in the children's responses to the picturebooks.

2.3.2.2 Linguistic development in young emergent bilinguals

In her seminal text Bialystok (2001) argues assertively that bilingualism confers advantages in particular linguistic tasks due to the bilingual's enhanced attentional control, that is, the ability to disregard distracting information that is irrelevant to the solving of the task. 'Bilingual children move in different cognitive worlds, experience different linguistic environments, and are challenged to communicate using different resources, remaining sensitive to different abstract dimensions' (Bialystok 2001, p 88).

Several recent studies have stressed the positive influences of 'previously acquired languages in foreign language classrooms' (Cenoz & Gorter 2015) as well as crosslinguistic influence (Falk & Bardel 2010). Traditionally linguists have been concerned with mother tongue 'interferences' which would hinder the comprehension and production of the target language (Lado 1957; Selinker 1972; Weinreich 1953). However in recent decades the concept of 'language transfer' (often used interchangeably with 'cross-linguistic influence') is considered to be facilitative as it was formerly thought obstructive' (Kellerman 1995, p 126). Odlin summarised 'language transfer' as the 'influence resulting from similarities and differences between target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired' (Odlin cited in Woll 2018, p 2).

These crosslinguistic influences, among other factors, depend on the type of individual bilingual the learner is. This could be a native speaker of English learning a new language, someone who chooses to learn a new language. These individuals, also called **elective** bilinguals, usually come from a majority language, for example English–speaking Britons learning French or Spanish (Valdés 2003).

Another type of bilingual is a new arrival in a country who is forced to learn the language of their new country. These individuals are also called **circumstantial** bilinguals, because

their first language is insufficient to meet the requirements of the new society they find themselves in, be they educational, political or employment related.

Some bilinguals live in bilingual and multilingual **endogenous** communities for whom using two or three languages is a daily reality. Frequent instances of these contexts are found in a country like India where familiarity with two languages is the norm in many regions of the country. In contrast, many bilinguals, through migration to monolingual regions, are able to use their first language only through social media, phone, or during vacations. These contexts are termed as **exogenous** and are often the result of immigration to a majority language country. Often these are second-generation immigrants who have a different home language, learning English as a second language, which is the context that I am most interested in. My enquiry for this PhD focuses on young children who come from the homes of new or established immigrants in Glasgow, Scotland, whose home languages are decidedly different to English – Urdu or Punjabi in most cases. They go to local schools that provide education in the English medium and are considered as English as Additional Language learners. I discuss the participants in greater detail in Chapters Four.

There are several theories of second language acquisition that support the notion of how one language assists the acquisition of the other. Cummins, as a way of explaining this crosslinguistic influence, advances the theory that there is a common underlying proficiency (CUP) between two languages. Skills, ideas and concepts that students learn in their first language will be transferred to the second language. Cummins proposed useful ways of talking about second language acquisition through the concept of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

BICS or conversational language is the set of skills needed in social situations. It is the day-to-day language needed to interact socially with other people. English language learners (ELLs) employ BIC skills when they are on the playground, in the lunchroom, on the school bus, at parties, playing sports and talking on the telephone. Social interactions are usually context embedded. They occur in a meaningful social context. They are not very demanding cognitively. The language required is not specialized. Cummins (2005) refers to the context of immigrants in the USA and states that these language skills usually develop within six months to two years after arrival in the U.S. The same can be said of the learners in the community in the UK.

CALP on the other hand, refers to formal academic learning. This skill, also referred to by

Cummins as academic language, includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject area content material. This level of language learning is essential for students to succeed in school. Students need time and support to become proficient in academic areas. This usually takes from five to seven years. Research (Thomas & Collier, 1995) has shown that if a child has no prior schooling or has no support in native language development, it may take seven to ten years for English language learners to catch up to their peers. Academic language acquisition isn't just the understanding of content area vocabulary. It includes skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesizing, evaluating, and inferring. Academic language tasks are context reduced. Information is read from a textbook or presented by the teacher. As a student gets older the context of academic tasks becomes more and more reduced. The language also becomes more cognitively demanding. New ideas, concepts and language are presented to the students at the same time.

Despite there being several critiques of Cummins' pedagogical tools of testing and assessment as too narrowly defined (for example: Aukerman 2007, Edelsky 1990), these terms provide teachers with a way of talking about second language acquisition and consider the students' proficiency in the native language and continue to contribute to the on-going discussion related to second-language acquisition (Cline & Frederickson 1996).

2.3.2.3 The quality of language experience

A large scholarly body of research exists on literacy acquisition of bilingual children of pre-school ages or in their early years at school (example: Drury 2007; Gregory 2008; Kenner 2000). There are several parent-observer case studies on the linguistic development of young bilingual children, the more famous among the older studies being - de Houwer 1990; Leopold 1939-1949; Totten 1960; etc., and more recently, Nicoladis and Genesee 1998; Li 1999 etc. However, time and again researchers have shown that the transition of pre-school English language learner children to school curriculum and children's acquisition of academic language does not depend on what language they use at home. Instead it has been underscored by seminal studies by researchers like Heath (1986) and Wells (1986) etc. that performance in an academic setting and related success are both linked to the quality of language experiences.

There are several ways in which children's literature has been incorporated in the class/school curriculum for young children. The potential of children's literature has lauded by many national and international studies such as Clark, Woodley and Lewis (2011), Evans et al., (2010) and OECD (2002) which state that 'growing up with books and

being a reader continues to be one of the biggest indicators of future success' (Arizpe et al, 2013, p 241). Debates about whether literature ought to used as pedagogical resources and whether children's literature is serious enough to be considered as pedagogical resource simmered in the early to mid 20th century. Alongside this, developments in opinions of reading methodologies and new ideas about literacy education using Children's Literature came to be incorporated into the curriculum around the 1950s (Solity & Vousden 2009). From early studies like Teale and Sulzby (1986) and Wells (1986) to more recent ones like Krashen (2004), McKenna (2001) and the OECD report of 2002, all suggest that early encounters with children's literature have lead to greater engagement with reading, improved literacy skills, and better literacy attainment (c.f. Hade 1991; Meek 1992; Nodelman & Reimer 2003; Sipe 2008, among others).

Of the many resources available in the large oeuvre of children's literature, picturebooks hold a special place when it comes to very young children as well as bilinguals. Especially in the western context, picturebooks are one of the first forms of literature that a young child encounters. Be it their colourful and engaging images or the comparatively lesser proportion of written text, this form of literature is by far the most appealing kind of text for young children. Owing to this perception, parents and cares are eager to provide picturebooks to young children often reading the books together or facilitating an environment of reading within domestic and familial spaces. Studies of children reading picturebooks in various settings and contexts by different researchers have underscored the benefit that reading art and pictures provides to children in developing their language and cognitive abilities (for example, Carger 2004; Heath & Wolf 2004; Safford & Barrs 2005). Referring to the study by Danko-McGhee of children encountering and responding to high quality picturebooks, Evans states that 'early meaningful art experiences can really inspire children in the field of literacy' (Evans 2009).

In recent years there has been empirical research conducted in the area of literacy acquisition through picturebooks in bilingual children, involving target groups of school going students (Barrat-Pugh 1994; Bothello & Rudman 2009; Mathis 2011 etc.).

2.3.3 Transactional theory of reader response and the 'gap' therein

Most of the studies mentioned so far have based their methods – be they empirical or theoretical studies – on the transactional theory of reader response. Rosenblatt's transactional theory states that all interaction between the text and reader is a 'transaction' (Rosenblatt 1982) where the reader's reaction to the text creates the meaning. This theory

of meaning making, which is increasingly 'the most popular and successful and significant theories in the field of literacy' and in the use of children's literature puts the child reader at the centre of the enterprise of reading (Arizpe 2013, p 243). As discussed in the earlier section in the context of schema theory and anticipation, the process of filling in the 'gap' that exists within the text (between the images and the written text, for example), or between the meaning made by the context of the reader and the textual signs and signifiers is crucial to the act of reading. While theoretical studies tend to use 'reception theory' and the 'implied reader' constructed by the text itself in the meaning making process (Iser, 1978), empirical studies with real readers, almost as a standard, use reader response theory to understand their process of reading and meaning making.

Several studies have used picturebooks in the classroom for a number of aims. Some studies have looked at art and aesthetics (Keifer 1995), others have investigated visual literacy (Arizpe & Styles 2003), and yet others have studies children's responses to postmodern picturebooks (Pantaleo 2008b ; Serafini 2005) and multimodality (Hassett & Curwood 2009). For a more detailed review of research in the classroom using picturebooks refer to Arizpe et al 2013 and Arizpe 2017.

However, there seems to be a gap in the research in bilingualism regarding interaction with picturebooks and literature in the emergent literate stage. The present inquiry proposes to build on such enquiries in literacy studies, affective and cognitive psychology and propel it in the direction of young emergent bilinguals using metafictive literature in picturebooks.

2.3.4 Culturally situated readers

From the previous section where I have discussed my Vygotskian stance to multiliteracies, we are reminded that every type of literacy – be it verbal, visual or cultural – is a socially constructed practice. Readers decode texts not in isolation but based on the practices and conventions of the social context in which they find themselves. The text themselves are created based on the social practices and cultural traditions – 'structures, institutions and power relationships' – of the society they originate from (Arizpe 2017, p 127).

> The accidents of physical geography and temporality determine the many aspects of our identity and how we perform our race, gender and even age, no matter where in the world we have grown up. We become readers within certain environments, material and cultural surroundings and these contribute to develop our interpretive ability within an understanding not only of reading but also of other literacy practices. Thus we are all culturally situated readers who bring this understanding and ability, along with our personal experience and imagination, to every new encounter with text and image. (Arizpe 2017, p 127)

Arizpe's assertion links reader-identity through location, gender, cultural context and race to the way readers respond to texts. The situated-ness of readers not only impacts the response, but also their ways of learning from these texts. Thus context and setting affects responses to texts as well as literacy learning.

2.3.5 'Mirrors windows and doors'

Turning attention from the readers to the texts, these picturebooks are cultural artefacts, which help in the identity construction of children since often children find these texts mirroring their own social and personal existence and roles. Identity is shaped and constructed by the current environmental and socio-political contexts and children's literature often helps construct these identities by reflecting them in the reader's milieu. This leads to the oft-quoted metaphor of 'mirrors, windows and doors' when explaining the nature and role of children's literature (Sims Bishop 1990).

Literature is said to act as a mirror reflecting life, and children are able to see new representations of themselves therefore seeing themselves in a different light with new possibilities (Arizpe, Farrell and McAdam 2013). This is especially true for racial and ethnic minority readers who can see their own life circumstances reflected in the literature, often leading to a greater appreciation of one's own culture (Cullingford 1998; Gopalakrishnan 2011; Loh 2009).

In the next metaphor, literature is said to act as windows to alternative and possible worlds, helping children understand perspectives that are different to one's own. This is especially beneficial in forming a more accepting understanding of others, more accepting of difference and otherness, thus widening cultural and imaginative horizons (Galda 1998; Gopalakrishnan & Ulanoff 2003; Gough 1998). The readers are able to compare their own worlds with what they see through the window of the picturebook, which acts as the portal to new worlds, thus developing an ability to see beyond their own situation. These opportunities availed through reading these picturebooks allow readers to 'immerse themselves into story worlds to gain insights about how people live, feel and think around the world - to develop emotional connections as well as knowledge' (Short 2011, p 130). This aspect is crucial in activating readers' Theory of Mind, helping them understand internal states of mind and motivations of characters.

The metaphor of windows leads on to the third one which is literature as a door which opens into the new perspectives, cultures and worlds where the young reader is sometimes moved to cross the threshold and relocate to new landscapes (Loh 2009). The negotiation

between the real and the imagined narrative of the story is what Meek (1988, p 29) believes is the 'dialogic process of reading' (proposed by Bakhtin, c.f. Maine 2015) which might inspire children to break down borders real or imagined and take social action and become, what Neito calls, 'active citizens of the world' (2009 p xi).

In recent times, we have seen an increase in research that looks at diverse literacy practices, which acknowledges the shifts in global communities, which are becoming increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic owing to globalisation and trends in migration. Scholars have tried to formulate more culturally responsive pedagogies and incorporate multicultural education in the curriculum (for example, Banks 2002 and Souto-Manning 2009). The benefits of this ideal in pedagogy are manifold as the international 'Visual Journeys' project showed us (Arizpe, Colomer & Martinez-Roldan 2014), with two particular advantages. On the one hand these efforts increase awareness of majority language readers of the cultural variety in the world and how lives are lead by people living in or from other places (metaphor of windows). On the other, they also validate the identities of the minority language readers who are often affected by subtractive forms of bilingualism as well as subtractive forms of bi-culturism where they feel obliged to adhere and conform to the majority culture.

This study, with the aim of using the full language capabilities of the participant bi/multilingual children, hopes to address issues of equity as well have a clearer picture of their (multi)literacy proficiencies with the ultimate aim of helping them learn and improve.

2.3.6 Bilingual children and emotions

Kramsch, in her seminal book *The Multilingual Subject*, writes that 'we have seen that language learners make meaning in ways that are sometimes different from the ways most native speakers do in their daily lives' (2009, p 53). Second language learners often show unconventional use of vocabulary, using the overlapping fields of meaning of related words. For instance, the word 'frustration' does not have a direct translation in Hindi or Urdu. As an ESOL teacher in the Indian subcontinent, I have often come across students using the Hindi/Urdu words for anger (*gussa*) and sadness (*naraaz*) to imply frustration and, owing to context, the meaning is usually clear. Language learners are also known for their inventive use of grammar and syntax to convey meaning, which, however unconventional, is most often able to convey the intended meaning. Therefore, keeping in mind the aim of using the full language capabilities of the participants, the study will also invite responses in the children's mother tongue. While it addresses the notions of the

whole emergent bilingual child as opposed to two monolinguals inside one language learner, I aim to investigate the children's use of language, vocabulary and translanguaging when discussing emotions during the study. This links the notion of multilinguality and our understanding of emotions – might the children demonstrate a better understanding of the emotions and emotion ekphrasis because they have the freedom and the choice to respond in their mother tongues? While the exact dynamics belong to the specialist field of sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, and outwith the scope of this thesis, any emerging links would be interesting to note. There is strong existing scholarship offering a greater understanding of the impact of multilingualism and multiculturalism on emotions, emotional awareness and empathy (c.f. Dewaele 2004; Dewaele & van Oudenhoven 2009; Dewaele & Wei 2013, among others).

2.4 Summary

In summary this section has provided a review of literature from the readers' aspect, noting the particular circumstances of bilingualism and the many variations in this phenomenon. This section also located the readers' specific kind of bilingualism and what previous studies have shown about young emergent bilinguals' linguistic and literacy development. Next this section delved into educational practices and how children's literature has been used and has impacted young learners as a pedagogical resource within the realm of schools and classrooms as well as outside. Finally I have explored how acknowledging the cultural situatedness of young readers enriches the whole process of participation and interaction with texts as well as, instead of focussing on the acquisition of a single language, shines a light on all aspects of children's response to the picturebooks.

The next two chapters will lay out the methodology and design aspects of my empirical study for this enquiry.

Chapter 3 The selected books: The vehicle that carries the study

The previous chapter highlighted the centrality of metafiction and metafictive picturebooks to this inquiry. The current chapter introduces the three picturebooks selected for the project and which form the central strand around which the complex pattern of our tapestry is woven. The chapter starts with a section on Gravett, the author and illustrator of these books, discussing her style and achievements. The following sections present the rationale for the selection of the specific picturebooks used in the fieldwork. Following this the chapter provides general overviews of plot and then highlights the metafictive elements in the books. In the final section of the chapter, the three picturebooks are analysed based on overarching themes, incorporating the lenses adopted for this enquiry.

3.1 Emily Gravett

Emily Gravett is a British author-illustrator is a critically acclaimed and beloved picturebook creator with a number of prestigious awards and award nominations to her name. A graduate of Brighton University, she has won the Macmillan Prize for Illustration and the Nestlé Children's Book Prize Bronze Award (twice). In 2005 and 2008, she was awarded the Kate Greenaway Medal for two picturebooks, *Wolves* (included in this study) and *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears*, respectively. Her other books like *The Odd Egg, Orange Pear Apple Bear*, *and Monkey and Me* have evoked an excited and appreciative response from critics as well as readers, with the Booktrust calling her 'an author-illustrator of unique talent' (Booktrust, online, n.d.). As well as critical acclaim, her books especially *Wolves*, have garnered much scholarly attention (Do Rozario 2012; Ghosh 2015; Nikolajeva & Scott 2006; Pantaleo 2010 among others). Even within the burgeoning field of British picturebooks, her books, teeming with complex visual and verbal narratives, intricate artwork and peritextual details stand out on the bookshelves.

Style

All of Emily Gravett's picturebooks offer an intricate latticework of form and content. The image and word synergy (Sipe 1998) is situated within engaging stories that invite reader interactivity. For example, *Monkey and Me* is a simple book that has pictures and words in an attractive layout, with rhyming words that invite a sing-along reading aloud, each turn of the page bringing a surprise. Titles like *Wolves* and *Again!* have tactile features like

holes and cut-outs and flaps that bring to attention the materiality of the books. Through a 'metatextual sleight of hand', Gravett embeds the narrative in the materiality of the books and vice-versa (Do Rozario, 2012), celebrating the existence of the book as an artefact. Salisbury (2008) notes that while labels such as 'postmodern' and 'metafictive' are less important considerations to artists than the work itself, Gravett certainly has made this complex synergy her signature style. Her protagonists, highly anthropomorphic and often, avid readers, interact with the material book as they progress through the narrative, creating a rich text which is replete with 'knowingness' and self-referentiality (Salisbury 2008, p.37).

Describing a complex picturebook: A personal note

As a literary researcher required to write about books with an objective critical eye, it is not within my remit to gush about the various features of a text. Yet, each time I try to describe a particular spread of these books, I have found myself become completely impressed by each little detail within each page. There is so much going on in every spread that I find it difficult to write short simple sentences describing the action on the page. Each aspect can be nuanced and further nuanced. Take the doublespread in which Little Mouse is escaping from the three bears in *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*. Along the bottom of the double pages, the mouse has taped three separate advertisements torn off newspapers, each one containing clear allusions to the story of Goldilocks and The Three Bears. The first features a mouse resting on a snug stool with a steaming bowl of porridge visible at the foot of the stool. The next scrap of advertisement is for a 'Middle – Sized' chair that is 'Just Right' for sitting on after having eaten 'too much porridge'. A scared mouse is seen to be sitting on the chair with two bears who seem to be looming over him. The third scrap of paper advertises a 'One Bounce' chair made of bear hair, which promises escape from all worries in one bounce. There is an order form at the bottom of the piece of paper saying 'Please send me straight to the next page because this bear is scar…' (rest torn off). Little Mouse is shown to be leaping straight to the hole in the page, bouncing off the chair and using his brush as a vaulting pole squashing the paint stained brush end. The stem end of the brush appears slightly gnawed. Each of these elements on the pages adds to the tongue-in-cheek humour of the book. When I describe a particular spread, I am torn between what little detail to write about and what to leave out. This, I believe is a sign of a successful complex text, a term Nikolajeva prefers over postmodern texts (2014).

3.2 The selected books

It was difficult to narrow down my selection of Gravett's texts for this study, given the wealth each one offers. After careful consideration, I decided to select three picturebooks, which are replete with metafictive features that engage reader's attention. The books also present interesting cases for a cognitive critical reading. The three books in order of their publication are: *Wolves* (2005)*, Again!* (2011) and *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts* (2013). In the following section, I start with a brief summary of each book and highlight some of their metafictive features.

Wolves

Even though the title is *Wolves*, this story shows us the fate, or rather, the possible fates of its central character, a rabbit. The front endpapers help in creating the sense of what is to come: the double-paged spread shows a coir doormat with a postcard (containing the publishing information) and a leaflet advertising *Wolves* and other new acquisitions available at the library, complete with the library address and stamp. One page turn later, the rabbit is seen choosing the book, then leaving the library with *Wolves* which he starts to read as he walks away. Over the next few pages, the readers see what the rabbit is reading, mainly facts about wolves. Slowly, unbeknown to the rabbit, the wolves escape the bounds of the book cover and start stalking him. The rabbit only realises the danger he is in at the very last instant as he faces the hungry maws of the wolf, leading to disastrous consequence. Or is that actually the case? A unique feature of the narrative of this book is that it has two possible endings. One page turn after the rabbit comes face to face with the powerful and slavering jaws of the wolf, the readers sees a ripped up book. It is the same book that the rabbit was reading, leading us to believe that the rabbit has come to a gruesome end. However, another page turn later, this is what we are informed:

> The author would like to point out
>
> that no rabbits were eaten during
>
> the making of this book.
>
> It is a work of fiction.
>
> And so, for more sensitive readers,

here is an alternative ending. (*Wolves*, unpaginated)

This direct communication with the readers disrupts the linear narrative of the text. It renders the story world unstable and the reader is unsure of what to believe - the visuals of the previous page or the words written by author? Even though the note from the author is supposed to reassure the readers, it releases a number of questions which makes the readers doubt the truth in the narrative. The next page turn shows the rabbit and wolf seated across a high table, with the text informing the readers that luckily the wolf was vegetarian so he shared a jam sandwich with rabbit, 'became the best of friends and lived happily ever after'. What the readers notice is that both the wolf and rabbit bodies are made up of collage-styled scraps of paper, that the wolf is missing his sharp teeth and also, that a bit of the rabbit's throat is missing. To add to the ominous feeling that something is not quite right, the rear endpapers have a double-page spread of letters lying on the doormat, all addressed to G Rabbit, which have not been opened. On top of the pile is an open envelope inside which is a letter, a sheet of paper that can be taken out, from the library, informing G Rabbit that the book *Wolves* is overdue, there are fines accruing and that his borrowing privileges are suspended till he returns the book. This leaves the reader to infer that the rabbit has not returned home for a long time, or indeed, as feared earlier, is dead. The endpapers lend weight to the first narrative, that of the rabbit being eaten up by the wolf, giving rise to a clear conflict between the authorial voice, i.e., the words on the page and the visuals. This was one of the most remarkable moments in the field study, described in the coming chapter, with the children reading the book astonished by the contradiction in the competing narratives in the text.

The book has some classic metafictive features like the indeterminacy of multilevel narratives, incongruity and gaps between verbal and visual text, use of a book-within-a-book (*mise en abyme*) and frame breaking. The book itself has an unstable identity since it veers between being a factual book about wolves and telling a fictional story about one particular rabbit. As Ghosh (2015) notes, 'visual depictions of the wolf pack shift between anthropomorphic and realistic, so the portrayal of these animals is humorous, yet unsettling and sinister' (p 209). While the tone of the words remains factual, the pictures of the characters tell a different story.

In a subversive, metafictive ploy, Gravett attributes more validity to the peritext, i.e., the endpapers than the central narrative within the start and end pages of the text. In so doing, she renders as problematic the very 'start' and 'end' of the story. The peritextual features are important in making full meaning of the 'real story'. From a reader response point of

view, these are features of a classic 'fiction text' which opens up a number of interpretive possibilities (Iser 1978). Readers are traditionally used to printed words being true and real, holding the only meaning in a given text. Here, the reader is faced with an unstable and unreliable narrative and has to search for clues, both visual and verbal, from the whole artefact - from cover page to cover page - to pin down the 'real story'. Dependent on these clues, the reader has to make selections based on schemas they are already familiar with, decide which interpretation fits best, and predict or 'read forward' into the narrative (Iser 1978, p 184). It is through the reading event that the complexity of the text is revealed.

Again!

This is the story of a young dragon who is ready for his bedtime story. The book starts with a very human and commonplace depiction of the young dragon holding up a book to a bigger dragon, whom we assume is his mother, for her to read to him. The younger dragon nestles in the crook of the older dragon who holds open the double spread of the book so that we, the readers, can read the text and the visuals. The book is read and the mum is tired, but the young dragon wants her to read the book 'Again!' This is the only direct speech that is uttered in the entire first plane of narration in the book. The second plane of narration is the story within the dragon's book, which is mostly narrative text with some direct speech. Already encountered in the previous picturebook, this book-within-a-book-feature also known as *mise en abyme* is a 'framing technique' of embedding a story-within-a-story, (Nikolajeva & Scott 2001). This embedded book tells us the story of a dragon, Cedric, who appears scary and powerful. He prowls around at night, capturing princesses, scaring trolls and creating all-round disruption and terror, and never, ever, falling asleep. The story, however, is changed by the mother with each re-reading because she is tired and wants to finish reading the book quickly. In a bid to make the story shorter, she changes the dynamic of the books characters. With the result that Cedric almost transforms into a big friendly giant, who adores the princess, kisses her goodnight and cuddles up to her for the night and leaves the trolls alone in peace.

Over the next few double spreads we see the little dragon insisting on the book being read over and over again. The mum who is nearly dropping off to sleep now, reluctantly gives in, reads a truncated version of the story each time and the little dragon realizes that something is not right because the story keeps changing: so different from his favourite rampaging dragon story. Finally, after the third re-reading, she just falls asleep, which

makes the little one, literally, hopping mad: he starts to jump on his mother, turning redder and redder, shouting 'Again!'. In the end, when the mother does not respond, he takes the book (which he is shown holding upside down, making the characters in the story tumble around the borders), fumes at it in frustration and eventually, unable to read the words, he snorts fire, burning holes in the next few pages.

For discussion, there are many points and interesting counterpoints – the dragon inside the story becomes less angry with each re-reading. The mum describes him as calmer and sleepier with every rereading. In a stark contrast, the real young dragon, becomes progressively more agitated and frustrated and angry with each turn of the page. So while the big dragon returns to his *normal* green ('normal' in the text world context), the young dragon becomes a livid red at the end, throwing fire out of his maws at the book.

Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts

Little Mouse comes upon (we are not told how) an old-style educational book of wild beasts. The descriptions are factual and the colour palette is muted. The images of the beasts are realistically drawn and evoke feelings of awe and dread in Little Mouse. So he sets about changing the pictures through imaginative artwork, divesting them of any fierceness and ultimately making the beasts less scary and more objects of hilarity.

The book is a large, hardbound volume in blue, with an angry lion in profile snarling and roaring on the cover. The title is bold and black, but no, it has been smudged with a painting brush. We notice a puny, scared-looking white mouse (eponymous, one presumes) who has written his own name in colourful paint, precariously stretching down to strike out the name 'Emily Gravett', with paint dripping down the front cover of the book. Thus, from the first glance at the cover, the reader is 'hooked'.

The first double spread depicts the profile of a pouncing lion. Even though the 'original' scene is sketched in a pared-back manner, the expression on the lion's face and its ferocious strength give it a scary appearance. Almost immediately, however, we notice that the lion has a colourful mohawk, is wearing pretty red mittens and has a safety pin stuck through his ear, and someone has taped 'shhhhh' over his roaring maw. In fact, we discover Little Mouse making off with the nibbled piece of paper from the front of lion's mouth – it is actually a speech bubble saying 'ROAR!' There is nothing pared back about this second level of text. The spread appears busy, with a collage-like appearance, and a

post-it stuck in a corner that has notes on 'how to make this page less scary', and printed verse using simple puns, alliteration and onomatopoeia. The pictures and artwork are so striking, almost overwhelming the printed words. This first spread sets the tone for the rest of the book: it is humorous, witty, subversive, realistic and artistic. This book is replete with multimodal features that are typical of metafictive picturebooks: torn, nibbled pages, interesting flaps, use of collage-like effect, differences in font sizes, textures, three-dimensional effects in pictures etc. The collage work imbues a DIY or craftwork-like feel, inviting tactile interaction with the book.

3.3 Common themes in the books that helped book selection

3.3.1 Complex texts

Gravett's books are exemplary complex texts, incorporating inventive paper engineering along with a number of celebrated metafictive features and devices such as intertextuality, frame-breaking, the blurring of perspective and boundaries between reality and fantasy, irony, changing viewpoints, non-linear narratives, non-traditional uses of plot, character and setting that challenge reader/viewer expectation, parody, unusual uses of narrator's voice and elements that invite performance and reader participation – all of these are features of a postmodern text (Anstey & Bull 2009; Lewis 2001; Nikolajeva 1998; Nikolajeva & Scott 2001). Metafictive texts also involve a pastiche of illustrative styles, and this is also the case with these three picturebooks.

3.3.2 Endorsement of reading

Themes of reading run through most of Gravett's books, especially in the *mise en abyme*. Gravett plays with various text types and forms (journals, scrapbooks, fairy tales, letters, postcards, post-its, newspaper clippings and advertisements, collage, origami instructions, menus, notices, etc.). There is a clear underlying message that *reading* is *important* alongside endorsement of literacy and reading. 'Meta' reading images and references – of the characters noticing the books, showing awareness of the reading and literacy process, of engaging with the book-within-the-book as an artefact – occur throughout the texts. The protagonist in each case is extremely invested in the book and the story. How they react to the book and the story, and how they read and write themselves into the texts (quite literally, at times), forms a central part of the storyline and influences the way readers engage with the narrative. While no human characters appear in the books, the animals that do appear are highly anthropomorphised.

Libraries are also highly important in Gravett's narrative. In *Wolves*, Rabbit is shown in one, leaving with a book called *Wolves*, the same one that the reader is holding in their hands. The endpapers show a circulation slip, a docket with a card that has a few dates stamped, implying previous readers who have 'burrowed' the book, left marks and graffiti on the pages as well as defaced some of the content. Gravett, thus, while celebrating the materiality of the book, also pays homage to the traditions of borrowing and lending books, with a librarian stamping the docket of a book, for example. These practices might well be those of yesteryears for a new generation of readers. Since modern libraries in the Western world are becoming increasingly automated, younger readers might have never seen a book docket. The pastiche of styles is self-reflexive and postmodern while simultaneously harking back to a time of the past.

After he borrows the book, the only 'action' the rabbit is seen doing is reading the book. He starts reading the book, just as the readers, in an act echoing the rabbit's, flip open the book. This act of mimesis or the readers imitating the rabbit or vice versa, takes us 'further into our book' (Hall 2008, p 120). He turns the pages and then, after a few spreads, at a very tense moment we see his fear-stricken eyes. The rabbit is seen to be a passive victim of his choice of book.

3.3.3 Emotions and humour

Emotions play a central role in the characterisation of the protagonists (fear, humour, anger, frustration, tantrums, etc). They provide an ideal platform on which to base this enquiry of looking at Theory of Mind development through picturebooks. As mentioned in the hypothesis earlier, when children engage with the character's emotional states, they are better able to understand and empathise with them.

Gravett's books abound in wit and humour, which is often an important vehicle to exercise subversion in the narrative. In *Again!* the characters in the book within the book provide a contrast to the developing intensity of the mother and child dynamic in the first level narrative. The book dragon becomes docile, befriends the erstwhile captive princess and kisses her goodnight while the trolls cosy up to bed, settling down for the night – all geared to provoke laughter in the readers and alleviate the tension between the sleepy mother and the increasingly angry Cedric. In *Little Mouse's Book of Beasts*, there are ten fearsome beasts in Little Mouse's list (lion, shark, bear, wasp, crab, crocodile, rhinoceros, owl, jellyfish and snake). While the colour scheme is realistic – earthy tones of brown,

ochre, red, grey, black – there are certain things in the book that are rather unrealistic. For example, water is not the mouse's natural habitat. In fact, mice dread water. Older readers aware of this fact would find the second double spread, where Little Mouse is diving in a shark infested sea wearing scuba gear, rather funny. Indeed, one realizes that humour is one of Little Mouse's strongest weapons in winning over his fears. With swabs of paintbrush, origami, paper cutting, etc., Little Mouse transforms each scary beast into something improbable and ridiculous. This is reminiscent of school children drawing moustaches on photos/pictures of feared male/female teachers to strip them of authority, even if only for a fleeting, imaginary moment. Gravett thus impresses upon the readers that laughing at something seen as fearsome is the best remedy – literally, laugh your fears away! The final creature, created through an assortment of all the scary features of the other animals (the lion's roar, the shark's bite, the owl's talons, the snake's fangs etc.) is a minotaur or sphinx-like creature, which, viewed the first time, inspires dread and awe while at the same time reminding the reader of the constructedness of the text.

3.3.4 Anthropomorphic characters that invite identification

In the taxonomy of literary characters put forward by Nikolajeva and Scott (2001), they draw a distinction between human and non-human characters. Non-human characters could range from animals, toys and machines to supernatural creatures and abstract entities like colours and letters. All the characters in the selected Gravett picturebooks are animals, some more 'animal' than others. This means that some of these characters are depicted more realistically, such as the pack of wolves that escapes the book that rabbit is reading in *Wolves*. The narrative within the text has the realistic tone of a non-fictional book describing the characteristics of wolves in the wild. In *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*, the animals that the mouse is scared of, in the 'big book' he is reading, are depicted in their natural form, fearsome creatures of the wild. On the other hand, the protagonists in each book, are, without exception, animals who are highly personified and demonstrate sophisticated anthropomorphism. They have human characteristics and use human props with ease. Rabbit walks upright on his two hind legs and reads a book as he walks away from the library; he is later shown to use cutlery while eating a burger. The Mouse in the *Little Mouse* books is even more sophisticated in that he is adept at reading, writing and creating art with a paintbrush, and can successfully express his feelings, plan ways of making his foes ineffective as well as plot his own escape. Cedric, the young dragon, demonstrates qualities of a young child who loves stories, being read to, and can be obsessed with reading the same story over and over again and can be rather forceful when

his demands are not met by a tired and hapless parent. In Nikolajeva's taxonomy of picturebook characters (2002), Cedric would be classified under supernatural characters since dragons are mythical rather than real.

Nikolajeva posits that personified characters are 'disguises for a child' (2002, p.125). However, that would be a rather simplistic explanation for the presence of the complex and well-developed characters of the protagonists in each of the selected books. Kummerling-Meibauer and Meibauer, in their essay 'Beware of the Fox,' face a similar inadequacy in explaining the complex characterisation of the picturebook *Fox* (Wild and Brooks, 2008). Describing the picturebook, they say that the sophisticated emotions described in the book are not appropriate disguises for a child. The current selection of Gravett's books also opens up a range of emotions, from basic ones to some which are more evolved. While child readers can mostly identify with the emotions of the animal characters in the narratives, in some instances the narrative introduces them to a whole new fictional world, which the readers have little familiarity with. Identifying with the rabbit (who is devoured by the wolves) or with the mouse (who might be flushed down the plug hole) are extreme instances of 'identification', which might be frightening for young readers. In her later writings, Nikolajeva has further explained the different types of reader identification with the characters, as has been detailed in the section on cognitive readings later in the chapter.

3.4 Content analysis based on relevant themes

Critical content analysis is useful as a methodology where the lens of analysis is influenced by the motivation of the researcher. Short (2017) emphasizes that, while literary critics have given us a number of theoretical lenses for literary analysis, in practice critical content analysis acknowledges the 'specific research focus, critical theory lens, and set of texts, as well as our reflections on the implications of our research for children as readers' (Short 2017, p 2). The analysis of the texts supports my choice of titles.

3.4.1 Metafiction

In *Again!,* various levels of narrative collapse into one metafictive plane. The first level (let us refer to this as Book One) is the actual book that the reader is holding, but there is a second book that the dragon is reading with his parent and which keeps shifting and changing (Book Two). In the first three double spreads, we see the mother holding up a book. The mother and child are seen reclining across the recto and the verso, facing us, with the cover of the opened book visible to the reader. The large backdrop (again

spanning recto and verso) to this domestic bed-time scene is the Third Book, enlarged for the reader in a cinematic effect. We can read that book, but we notice that the mum is changing the book's story each time she reads it, so the story becomes smaller and simpler till the words just disintegrate into 'z…z…z…'.

The question becomes: Which book is the actual book – the 'real', unchangeable book that the two of them were reading? The Third book, visible to us on the sixth opening, is the one, which Cedric tries to read. He turns the book upside down, and the text that slides to the corner, in broken, haphazard lines, is the same that we have seen on the second opening. In his anger, he burns a hole in the page, which the reader is actually able to touch. In including this whole, the author not only draws attention to the status of the book that the reader is holding as a material object, she further confounds the various levels of narrative, especially when the characters of the second book fall out of the book through the burnt hole.

Voice/narrator/character – Who is the voice reading out the second book? It is fairly easily to argue that it is the mother's voice as she is the one narrating and changing the story. As mothers are wont to do, they tell stories where their children appear as the stars of the stories. This makes it easy for the reader to believe that the story of the book dragon *is* the story of the little dragon. Little wonder then that all the children reading the book in my Literature Circle quite naturally started referring to young dragon in **Book One** as Cedric although the young dragon is never named.

As explained in the preceding chapter, Nikolajeva (2014) links a cognitive reading of a text with the use of devices like embedded mind reading. It would be interesting to note which level of mind reading the children were engaging with. Which 'book' were they reading? Which writing on the page? Were they reading the topsy-turvy writing, for example? The different fonts? Which cues were they paying attention to – the small, printed, evenly matched script or the actual visuals? These questions are answered in Chapter Six, where I discuss at length the manner in which the children's responded to these questions raised by the narrative as well as the metafictive features on the whole.

3.4.2 Multimodality: Use of art

Using different styles of art to distinguish between the different levels of the book

In *Again!* the style of art in 'Book One' is noticeably different to that in 'Book Two' and 'Three' – these differences set them apart as distinct from each other. A similar approach is

used in *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*, where the art for the two levels of the book is distinctly different (the art in the unadorned pages and the ones Little Mouse creates). In Wolves, the 'first book', the book that the readers are holding in their hands, is sparsely filled with Rabbit taking up most of the space. The second book, Rabbit's borrowed book, has a non-fictional, factual feel to it, which serves to create the distinction between our storybook and Rabbit's. However, soon the distinctions between the two levels of narrative blur as the wolves are seen to materialise in Rabbit's landscape, stealthily stalking him.

3.4.3 Radical change characteristics

Gravett's texts exhibit a number of Radical Change features, chief among them a non-linear organisation and a non-sequential format of text, an interactive format and multiple layers of meanings. These picturebooks also contain instances of multiple perspectives and unresolved endings. As I mentioned earlier, these features made it difficult to describe the text in a straightforward manner. The reader opens a page and does not have a clear left to right progression on the page. On most of the pages, multiple level narratives are created through a host of tactile features like graffiti on post-its and scraps of paper, fold-out flaps and openings, holes and cut outs as well as different fonts demarking different planes of narration. On opening a spread, the reader has no clear sense of direction with any linear left to right progression. To read the text in the small scraps of paper, the reader has to turn the book around physically. Once the reader gets engrossed in reading the small-sized writing on these scraps, they tend to break away from the larger narrative on the spread and enter a new narrative, often an intertextual world, opening up avenues to other stories and parallel worlds. This is the non-linear and non-sequential nature of these books, and it is reminiscent of online texts, which are full of hypertext links. As soon as we click one link we are removed from the original story, and the more links we click, the more worlds of different texts open up. Gravett's book is an excellent example of a digital, graphic text that exemplifies the numerous features of postmodern and metafictive texts depicting a number of Radical Change characteristics.

3.4.4 Affordance for identification

This section examines some of the devices in the Little Mouse books that may result in greater reader engagement. In both books, the narrator is Little Mouse himself; as such, this is a first person narration representing the 'character's interior consciousness, dilemma and emotional states'. This is 'generally used to help readers align sympathetically with the characters' (Stephens 2015, p. 28). Neuroscientists attribute this possibility to the human mirror neuron

system – neurons get activated (fire synapses) when one acts and when one observes the same action being performed by another. This attribute also possibly extends to fictional representation of an action. Thus, readers start identifying with the characters; they get engaged to the characters affectively as well as cognitively, which activates their sense of justice, hope and empathy. For example, empathy for a frightened mouse leads to feelings of concern and hope that the mouse will somehow overcome his fears through action. The same empathy may cause the reader to feel relieved and triumphant when the mouse manages to outwit every scary beast with his wit.

As mentioned earlier in the first section of Chapter Two, identification can be of two types (Nikolajeva 2014a, 2014b, 2015) – immersive identification and empathic identification. Immersive identification, as the name suggests, is when the reader is one with the interiority of the fictional character's emotional states, unquestioningly assuming their hopes, fears, feelings and yearnings as their own. The reader here is unable to distance themselves from the narrative as well as the character's actions. On the other hand empathic identification is when the reader has a critical detachment from the characters on the page, their emotions and their actions, and yet can identify with them. Since empathic identification requires a certain level of criticality and distancing from the narrative and the characters, it can be acquired through multiple readings of the same text. A powerful picturebook like *Wolves* might frighten some readers at the first reading when they identify with the rabbit in an immersive manner. However re-reading the text will allow readers to understand the story and the devices, and when readers start looking into the technical details of a text, they are able to consider the narrative critically as well as build distance from the raw emotions that they felt on first reading. Complex texts such as these afford identification at different levels and given the appropriate level of scaffolding, young readers can reflect on their own levels of engagement and identification with the texts.

3.4.5 Theory of mind and higher order mind reading

Cognitive criticism facilitates the reading of a character's emotion ekphrasis, a skill that is essential for a reader's or a person's (real or fictional) theory of mind. For instance, in the *Book of Beasts*, based on my analysis, there are three levels of embedded mind-reading in progress. Examples of the first order of mind-reading include: i) what the reader thinks/feels; ii) what the mouse directly says it thinks/feels. In the second order, there is what the reader thinks the mouse thinks/feels (A thinks that B thinks…), and iii) in certain pages there is the presence of the painted yellow mice (C) which leads to further complex

levels of mind-reading and gauging the emotions of the characters (B thinks that C thinks that B thinks…). I would not consider the beasts present in the text as sentient beings actively communicating with either the other characters on the page or with the readers. An exception would be the bear spread (spread number three) where it appears that the three bears are actively chasing the mouse and the mouse's escape route is a bouncy chair from which he asks the reader to bounce him away. He is seen launched from the chair into a mouse-sized hole in the page, about to pop through to the next spread. In this regard of embedded mind-reading, the Little Mouse book has two levels of 'diegesis' or levels of narration. It is written in a diary/ scrapbook format with just two voices – the omniscient narrator (the verses, instructions) and the character (Little Mouse's scribbled notes on the pages, his screams 'Eeeks!' upon viewing a scary beast). The mouse takes on the role of a diegetic character as well as a extradiegetic character. The diegetic character is the one inside the text world and the extradiegetic narrator is one with a perspective 'above' or 'outside' of the text world. So there forms a dynamic relationship between the Little Mouse and the painted yellow mice within the narrative sketched on by the Little Mouse. Other voices are part of the chorus of peritext – newspaper clippings, advertisements, the marginalia etc. In my fieldwork, I would like to look further into how these additional voices affect the readers and their Theory of Mind.

3.4.6 Emotion ekphrasis and embedded voices

There are crucial links between the different semiotic systems mentioned in the preceding chapter and the current examination into cognitive poetics. The visual semiotic system involves still and moving images with a focus on colour, vector, line, foreground and viewpoint. The gestural concerns facial expression and body language, involving movement, stillness, body position, etc. The audio (music and sound effects) involves volume, pitch, rhythm, silence and pause. Lastly, the spatial semiotic system concerns layout and organization of objects in space and involves proximity, direction and position in space. These systems are all interconnected and to take this further, they are all linked to the concept of emotion ekphrasis and theory of mind discussed previously. Emotion ekphrasis is the embodiment of emotion in visual and verbal modes. By extension, emotion ekphrasis is an embodiment of audio, gestural and spatial modes. To have a well-developed Theory of Mind, a reader needs to be able to interpret what they see, hear and read. A listener can make out a happy tune from a sad one; a reader can tell an angry gesture from a welcoming one. Thus, a cognitive reading of a text has to engage with multiple semiotic systems. A well-developed

theory of mind interpretation of emotions in a multimodal postmodern and metafictive text can only be successfully done with the help of all our sensory faculties.

In the first spread of *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts* involving the lion, a few questions occur to the (adult) reader. Is the lion a sentient being in the text? From its glare fixed at nothing, it seems it is just a picture. Is the mouse scared of a painted on paper lion or a real one? Is the mouse aware that the lion is a painted one? Or is he pretending it is a real one? Is it safe to assume that the mouse would not have managed to make the changes – like putting mittens on the lion's claws and tearing away his 'roar'- if he was dealing with a real lion? This takes us back to the discussion that most often, even when our mind knows that the stimulus is unreal (pretend/fictional), our brain perceives it as real and thus affectively responds to it as such. While the mouse might be aware that the lion is a painted picture, it reacts to the picture as if it were an abhorred/ feared creature to be disarmed as quickly and gingerly as possible before making a hasty escape from the scene (of his deed/crime?).

While the above questions may be easily answered and dismissed, they, nevertheless, lead to some reflection on the embeddedness of the emotion ekphrasis within the text. Most of the double spreads involving a scary beast have two mice. One is the protagonist while the second is the protagonist's representation of the self – a comic sketched mouse, most often drawn in yellow, using his cat hair paintbrush, mainly portrayed scarpering away from the beast, running away, peeping or trying to hide. The mouse essentially creates graffiti-like art with the painted beasts. We view this artefact on the page along with him. On the other hand, we get involved emotionally in the story of Little Mouse, experiencing his adventures and endeavours as the story progresses. Thus, this is a typical postmodern picturebook, both drawing the reader in as well as distancing the reading self from the text. At one moment, we are at the same level as Little Mouse admiring his handiwork and in the next, we see Little Mouse as part of the picture trying to escape his compromised yet feared opponent on the page.

3.4.7 Confounding schemas

According to Stephens (2011), when readers identify the initial sequence of a script, 'they anticipate what is to come and derive satisfaction from how the text expands the by completing or varying the expected pattern. When readers respond to the script and its further articulation, they are engaged in what Turner (1996, p 20) refers to as 'narrative imagining': readers predict what will happen and subsequently evaluate the wisdom or folly involved'

(2011, p. 15). In *Wolves*, the story begins with Rabbit reading a book about wolves. Almost immediately, in a significant reversal of gaze, the reader notices that the wolves have their sights set on the rabbit, thus launching the quarry-predator dynamic. In a sinister foreshadowing, the unsuspecting rabbit walks in to the maws of the frightening wolf. The act of the wolf gobbling up Little Red Riding Hood is brought sharply to mind, and the reader cringes expecting a bloody outcome. The opening with the mauled bookbinding and ripped paper suggests a terrifying (if schema and expectation satisfying) end to the rabbit. However, the author foils expectations by claiming the wolf is vegetarian, causing surprise and incredulity; scepticism even. The (questionable) claim that the wolf is vegetarian is juxtaposed with the image of rabbit and the wolf (now toothless) eating the jam sandwich. However, the rabbit appears to have been patched back together with glue with a bit of his throat missing. This 'combination of satirical narrator and manipulation of visual viewpoint' leads the reader to question the reliability of the narrator and become actively engaged in deciding whether to believe the narrator or not (Ghosh 2015, p 206). The untrustworthy words undermined by the 'counterpointing imagery' (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001) allude to issues of power and unreliable narratives. If young readers pick up on this incongruity and tension in the narrative and the improbability of the 'vegetarian wolf' becoming fast friends with the rabbit, they will start to appreciate the irony in *Wolves*, leading them to a more sophisticated literary appreciation of the story.

Again! too offers a similar confounding of emotional schemas. The story starts by conforming to expectations: child going through its bedtime routine – bath, brush and bedtime story with mum. However, it is no ordinary child – it is a young dragon. From previous experience of books and fantasy scripts, the readers know that dragons fly and breathe fire. When the mother does not read the story repeatedly as he requests, the young dragon becomes upset and throws a tantrum. This, in itself, is not surprising, but what defies expectation is the implications of the young dragon snorting fire for the state of his favourite book and the characters *inside* it. The other startling feature is that the book being read is a story that involves another angry fire-breathing dragon called Cedric. Using the *mise en abyme* device, the story unfolding within the book follows a princess-captured-by-dragon script. However, as mentioned earlier, with each re-reading of the story, the mother changes the story, making it shorter for her convenience and toning down the unfolding drama: the angry dragon in the book calms down, the princess is tired and finally the gatekeeper trolls, the princess and the dragon itself fall asleep in great bonhomie after sharing a goodnight kiss.

3.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the selected metafictive picturebooks, the selection rationale and the main themes running through the three texts. The texts are then analysed based on the overarching themes of cognitive criticism. I noted that complex texts like these are difficult to narrate, read aloud or even analyse due to the intricate web of metafictive features which foreground the constructedness of the text while at the same time drawing the reader in emotionally into the narrative at the heart of the picturebook. I pose a number of textual questions with the hope that the children reading these books during the fieldwork will notice these puzzling features. The methodological details including the design of the fieldwork is presented in detail in the chapter that follows.

Chapter 4 Research design and methodological overview

In the current chapter, I present an overview of the methodology used in my research project. I begin with a discussion of the research paradigm that guides this project followed by sections detailing the specific research methods adopted in this research and the issues related to sampling. The next three sections provide a description of the study location, schools, and participants, the data collection process and the fieldwork chronology detailing the phases of the empirical study. Following that I note the ethical considerations and my perspective as a parent researcher and previous experience of working with children. I also note my iterative reflections on the fieldwork during and after it was conducted. The final section ends with a description of how I have decided to work with the data with a focus on transcription, translation and the data analysis.

4.1 Research paradigm and epistemology: Qualitative research with a constructionist perspective

The design of this project is such that the textual content analysis of the books as presented in the preceding chapter is extended by empirical research on children's responses to the selected texts. In the introductory chapter I have delineated my positionality as a multilingual teacher of English originally from India and a researcher in social sciences who is a mother to a young bilingual and bicultural child. These are the most important factors that influence my fundamental philosophical world-view which in turn impact my epistemological and ontological stance. My researcher positionality also informs my axiology, which are the 'values', 'beliefs', 'ethics' that the researcher holds (Coe 2012; Cohen et al. 2011; Hitchcock & Hughes 1995). The epistemological stance, which determines the credibility and adequacy of research (Gray 2004), along with my values and ethics as a researcher have guided my choice of theoretical framework, methodology and methods. With these considerations, I adopted a qualitative approach within a constructionism paradigm for the empirical aspect of this inquiry.

A qualitative approach is best suited to my research since it creates the space for me to incorporate the different perspectives of the participants as well as myself as the researcher. Qualitative research allows 'multiple constructions and interpretations of reality' to be

taken into account, which are often 'in flux' and are quite often likely to 'change over time' (Harrison 2001, p 324).

4.1.1 Social constructionist paradigm

This study is placed in a social constructionist paradigm as it locates reading as an interaction between text and reader, wherein the meaning gleaned is socially constructed. This also takes into account the crucial role of the researcher who is mediating the dialogue from her own positionality. As Crotty (2003) explains, in a social constructionist view there is no pre-existing single meaning or set of meanings that the readers are expected to discover. Instead, meaning is to be co-created and constructed by readers as they interact with others and the context or social environment they are trying to make sense of (p 42-44). Constructionism lays much emphasis on the 'social conventions of language and other social processes' that lend to the different layers and the social origin of meaning (Schwandt 1994, p.127). In this way, it differs from constructivism where meaning making is viewed as a more individual activity.

The same epistemological and ontological considerations could be applied to the non-empirical aspect of the textual content analysis. The chosen texts are a result of the author's construction of reality. The narrative, whether derived from traditional fables and fairy tales or deconstructed and given a postmodernist subversive twist, is a product of the social constructions of the milieu in which the artist lives and writes. At the same time, every authorial creation of fiction involves creativity, truth, representation as well as untruths and figments of the imagination. According to Nikolajeva (2014b) and Lamarque (2010), fiction needs to be plausible and not necessarily represent the truth. The literary value of art and literature is not limited by the truth involved in the piece of work.

The content analysis carried out on the primary texts for this study investigated the range of textual affordances, which help answer the research questions. The analysis was carried out from my perspective as a researcher, which assumes an interpretivist stance, using the theoretical lenses that I considered appropriate. In addition, the fact the texts yielded multiple meanings, which are 'in a constant state of revision' also conforms to the constructionist view of socially constructed meaning and reality (Bryman 2016, p 17).

4.1.2 Theoretical perspective: Interpretivism and transactional theory of reading

This project, with its emphasis on the participants' individual and collective response to and engagement with narratives in picturebooks, aligns itself with the interpretivist

paradigm since it seeks 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (Crotty 2003, p 67). The interpretivist paradigm finds expression in the Transactional Theory of Reading (Rosenblatt 1982) where every individual reader's meaning-making process would be unique and personal (Rosenblatt 1994).

According to Rosenblatt (1982), the Transactional theory of Reading has its origins in Schema Theory. A schema, as explained earlier in Chapter Two, is essentially a cluster of knowledge or memory stored in the mind, also known as 'cognitive frameworks', which helps process and relate to new information. Transactional theory (which falls within Reader Response theories) stresses the connections that the reader makes between the text and previous experience or learning (stored schema). In other words, each reader has her individual experiences which, when called upon by the stimuli of the text, will result in unique interpretations and meaning. These, in turn, will be distinct from interpretations made by other readers. Thus I am situating my study within a tradition that does not aim to generalise. Since the success of this PhD project depended upon a set of readers sharing their response to the selected texts, the philosophical stance of constructionism and interpretivism in combination with Transactional Theory of Reading seemed to me the most appropriate foundation for this enquiry.

4.1.3 Axiology

In terms of axiology, or my beliefs and values, I subscribe to the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research as laid out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and followed them at every step. One of the first requirements was for me to get a clearance from Disclosure Scotland, the agency that manages the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme in Scotland, which ensured I was fit to carry out research with children (Mygov.scot, 2016). However, it is difficult to limit the ethical considerations to one particular section of the thesis. I have critically questioned and reflected on every step of the fieldwork and on the research project as a whole on an ongoing basis (Alderson and Morrow 2011). Ethical considerations are integrated into each stage of the research design and have, in the main, influenced issues of selection and use of primary texts, access to and selection of participants, informed consent from parents, teachers and especially children. In addition, there were questions of safety: how to keep the identities and data of the children safe at the site of fieldwork and my research/study spaces. Ethics involving children in general is a complex, ideological, political process involving much internal iteration and often the 'one size fits all model' does not cover all aspects involved in research with children (Van Hoonaard 2004). Working with bilingual/ multilingual

children is more complex in that the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspectives of child development, their 'human potential' and the importance of their 'voice' are embedded in the research process (Maguire 2005). Apart from the logistical concerns mentioned, there were overarching questions of my position as a researcher in relation to the school, the parents, as well as the children and the power dynamics involved therein; fair representation of the responses, the possibility of bias in the interpretivist qualitative analysis of the data and anonymity in reporting the data. I have discussed these issues later on in the chapter.

4.2 Location of the study

Glasgow, with a population of 1.24 million people, is the largest city in Scotland (Nrscotland.gov.uk, 2016). The schools in the Glasgow City Council cater to the schooling needs of a multiethnic and multicultural population speaking over 149 different home languages (Bilingualism Matters 2016, online). About 91.7% of children use English in their home lives and 8.3% of children use additional languages at home such as Polish, Urdu, Scots, Punjabi and Arabic (Nrscotland.gov.uk, 2016). Given this scenario it became increasingly more fitting that I focused my study on bi/multilingual speakers, making the study even more relevant to the social and education setting.

4.2.1 Site

> Educational theorists and practitioners have always recognized the importance of physical space in an early learning environment, with prominent theorists such as Werner, Piaget, and Montessori arguing that a child's environment is crucial to his or her development and that educational environments should be rich in stimuli providing opportunity for overall development.
>
> Berris & Miller 2011, p 2.

Bearing in mind the emphasis that scholars have laid on the physical space of learning and the need for a stimulating environment, I decided to base my fieldwork in one of the Glasgow Council primary schools. Using a fully running school allowed me to tap into the stimulating and energizing environment without having to set it up from scratch. Furthermore, due to the longitudinal nature of the study, it was important that there was minimal disruption/change to the students' study schedule to ensure the sustainability of the project over a period of a full school year. Another reason the school was a good site was the fact that the children had not met me before the start of the project – so I was unfamiliar to them. Meeting me – the researcher and the project leader – in an environment

that was well known to them would give them the security and confidence to open up. This would smooth the process of creating a rapport with the participants. Since power relations in the researcher – participant dynamic are often tilted in favour of the researcher, the familiar environment would give the participants some amount of control over the research proceedings and facilitate a child's sense of competence and independence (Berris & Miller 2011).

My aim in this project was to work with children who speak Bengali/Hindi/Urdu or Punjabi as their home language, since these are languages I speak and understand. When I got in touch with the Glasgow City Council's department of English as an Additional Language teaching, they recommended a few schools which have high numbers of children speaking these languages. One of the schools agreed to collaborate with me. With permission from the Glasgow City Council (letter attached as Appendix 1) and the cooperation of the Head Teacher of the school, I conducted the study at a middle-sized primary school in the City of Glasgow Council. It is a Catholic school but welcomes students from a number of religious and ethnic backgrounds; it also boasts strong links with the local community.

4.2.2 Sampling

Once I located a school with the desired mix of EAL students willing to host my fieldwork, the next step was the selection of participants. I had built up a positive relationship with the school and discussed the research with the Head of the EAL Service in Glasgow as well as the Headteacher of the school. When I pitched the project to the students, I received a positive response and many students were keen to participate. Working on the advice of the Head Teacher, the class teachers identifed two children each from both sections of Primary One and Primary Two classes based on their learning needs. From an ethical perspective, I was certain that I did not want my participant selection criteria to be random or based on chance like a first-come-first-served basis. The teachers finally nominated a total of nine students who had a range of abilities. Some of the students were highly articulate in English and had a good ability to working within a group. Others, however, were lacking in confidence as well as the ability to communicate clearly in English. This range would be crucial in seeing their responses over a period of time. The size of the participant group became smaller in the second phase, when four of the original nine dropped out of the sessions for a number of reasons. So the second and third phases were conducted with five students each.

Participation in the project was on a voluntary basis and Plain Language Statements (PLS) and consent forms were sent to the parents and guardians of the children. Since some of the Urdu speaking parents were not entirely comfortable with reading English, I supplied Urdu translations of these documents. I also prepared child-friendly consent forms in order to seek the consent of the participants. The children were able to understand the forms and signed them using symbols, emoticons or letters as most of them had yet to learn to write their full names in English. I collaborated with the teachers and followed the class teacher's advice in forming Literature Circles and groups/pairs of the children so that the selection served the overall aims of the project.

4.2.3 The participants

In the first phase of the project, there were nine students who participated in the Literature Circle. As mentioned earlier, I depended on the discretion of the class teachers and the Head Teacher for the nomination of the participants. The teachers based their choice on the need to provide a range of competency in my selected group. As a result, the children were selected based on their classroom performance and engagement as well as their EAL proficiency. EAL learners in Scotland are assessed on their English proficiency across five different stages (Education.gov.scot. 2005, online):

Stage 1: New to English

Stage 2: Early Acquisition

Stage 3: Developing Competence

Stage 4: Competent

Stage 5: Fluent

The school had a part-time EAL teacher visiting the classes and working with selected children. Apart from Zain and Najab who were deemed sufficiently competent in English at their respective ages, all the other participants received support from the EAL teacher on a regular basis.

Pseudonym	Mother Tongue	School Year	English Proficiency
Zain	Urdu	P1	Developing competence
Mohammed	Urdu	P1	Early Acquisition
Saleem	Urdu	P1	Early Acquisition
Masood	Urdu/Portuguese	P1	New to English
Naima	Urdu	P2	Early Acquisition
Najab	Urdu	P2	Developing competence
Malina	Urdu	P2	Early Acquisition
Javed	Urdu	P2	Early Acquisition
Zinia	Urdu	P2	Early Acquisition

Table 4. 1 **Fieldwork participants (using their pseudonyms)**

4.2.4 Setting

The setting of the book discussion gatherings was inside the school but not within the children's classroom. A separate room, changeably as stationery storage room, a play room, a chill-out room, a quiet-room for staff who wanted to work on their own away from the staff room and at times as a room for older students to practice their dance routines for their annual concert, was assigned to us by the school office. As a space it was easy to access and informal. Research suggests that thoughtful and appropriate design of physical space can offer the capacity for exploration, learning through play, peer interaction and the development of self-confidence and social skills (Berris & Miller, 2011). Space should be flexible, with moveable furnishings and equipment, offering play places at different angles and levels and, to afford both quiet and active spaces (Curtis & Carter, 2005). This room with its changeable roles for different groups of students and staff became 'our room' for

the time that we spent there. Since the furniture was movable, we were able to arrange it in a circular manner for book readings and discussions, and push it to a side for activities and performances that required more space for movement.

The location of this separate space afforded the 'different' and 'special' nature of this project of reading picturebooks, which allowed the children to the push the normal boundaries of 'fun' that is acceptable within the classrooms. At the same time, the special space being a part of the school, the children were well within the bounds of the school rules and discipline to know that there was a serious purpose to these meetings. It was an 'in-between' place, which could also be referred to a *liminal* space (Conroy & de Ruyter 2009; Land et al. 2014; Turner 1985). Just as my role was that of an 'in-between' sort of person – not a staff member, not an outsider, but someone who could break the routine of a school day with their books, activities, games and recording devices. For example, at the start the children all raised their hands to seek permission to speak or answer a question that I posed to the group. As I did not wish to impose this restriction on their spontaneous responses, I told them that they did not have to raise hands to speak. They could speak whenever they wished, only rule being they ought to wait till another person has finished speaking. This was a loosening of their classroom rules, and I was aware that this might, at times, lead to confusion and anarchic responses from the children. However, I wished to get their instinctive reactions to the textual situations and wished to encourage spontaneity, which might have been curbed by the rule of raising hands and seeking permission to speak.

In terms of replication, the requirements of the setting of the project are simple enough to be reproduced, but rigorous enough to stand up to the scrutiny of Ethics committees of The University of Glasgow as well as the City of Glasgow Council's EAL Department.

4.3 Data collection methods

For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'method' refers to the research tool or instrument that is used to collect the data and analyse (Arthur 2012). I used a range of ethnographic and qualitative methods for this research. These included a) Literature Circle discussions, b) observation, c) semi-structured interviews and d) visual and creative responses. In this section I will describe how each of these methods was carried out.

4.3.1 Literature Circle discussions

The primary method of collecting data was through discussions with the students. These discussions were held in small gatherings, with children poring over one or more copies of the same book and experiencing the text together. These gatherings, called Literature Circles, were formed to provide children with a less intimidating space were they are not expected to give the 'right' or 'correct' answer and where they can 'collaboratively explore their interpretations' (Punch 2002; Short 2011). When the researcher is unable to guide the participant's responses, unequal power relations are righted in favour of the participants (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister 2003) and ensures that the participants take back some of the power from the role of the researcher, making it a more democratic process of data generation and collection.

Reading texts in pairs or groups is an active and social process of meaning making (Farrar, 2017), in keeping with the social constructionist stance adopted by this study. As Crotty (2003) argues, social constructionism results in meaning making amongst a group rather than meaning making by an individual. This also resonates with Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading, which argues that reading is an active rather than passive engagement between people and texts. The comfort of an established Literature Circle offered young readers the confidence to share their opinions as well as respond to ideas offered by others in the group, making the process a richer experience. The teachers were offered the option of joining in some of the initial Literature Circle discussion, but they trusted me to work with the children on my own as the children gained more confidence and grew comfortable in my presence.

4.3.2 Observation

I observed classroom activities on two separate occasions to build familiarity with the future participants, norms of the school, and the routines of the class. For the most part, I was a silent observer and did not participate in classroom activities. The children in the classroom were aware of my presence and occasional interactions with the teacher and other students. This allowed them to develop familiarity with me so that when they were selected to form the Literature Circles, I was not a complete stranger to them. All the class teachers separately introduced me to their classes and invited me to introduce my picturebook project in brief with the students. This created interest among the students and thus helped in recruiting volunteers. These introductory sessions were the only time I abandoned my observer status, as I actively sought the attention of and addressed the

whole class directly. Otherwise, I was taking extensive notes to record as much detail the behaviour of the participants with the aim of making a narrative account of their classroom behaviour. My observation notes were unstructured; I wrote down what I thought was relevant and related to the project, using the observation proforma attached as Appendix 2 (previously approved by the Ethics Board).

4.3.3 Semi-structured interview

I used semi-structured interviews to interview the participants about their reaction and response to the texts. Given the somewhat unpredictable nature of children's responses, it was necessary that I made allowances for deviation and distraction from the questions. Following a strict structure and sequence of questions regardless of the children's replies might have come across as unfriendly and might have put them off from participating unhindered in the interview process. These interviews were incorporated into my Literature Circle plans.

I interviewed the four class teachers for their reflections on the project, with special focus on the implementation of the Pilot study (list of interview questions attached as Appendix 3). These interviews were conducted a month after the completion of the Pilot Study and I sought their thoughts on the books as classroom resources. I also asked them if they were able to note any changes in the children since attending the Literature Circles. For this too, I used semi-structured interviews. It was appropriate to keep a somewhat flexible structure to my interview schedule so that I could react empathetically to the teachers' replies. While it was useful to have a pre-prepared list of questions covering the ground I needed to, I was open to any suggestions that the teachers made during the course of the conversation. This allowed me to pursue a line of inquiry or a different topic broached by the interviewees so that I could learn their thoughts and reflections to my project. As a result, I had to re-sequence my list of questions and add further sub-questions to my original questions. While this meant thinking on my feet, it was not awkward or complicated since I had built a good working relationship with the four teachers and as interviewees they were helpful and cooperative.

I recorded the interviews digitally and transcribed the recordings for later reference and analysis. The Ethics Committee approved these methods and processes of recording and transcription. Appropriate consent and permissions were requested from the children and participants involved assuring them of privacy and confidentiality.

4.3.4 Text related creative activities and reflective dialogue

Since the project emphasises visual and multimodal texts and learning, it was reasonable to extend that focus into the data collection methods. The children were asked to respond to the selected texts and the related discussions through drawings, sketches and performative tasks. The methods used in this project align themselves with culturally relevant pedagogy (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The oral, visual and dramatised tasks used here have been used in similar classroom research contexts with multicultural children (Arizpe et al. 2014; Arizpe & Styles 2003; Sipe 2008). Along with the verbal responses, the children found it easy to use their drawing and colouring skills to respond to the textual contexts. Often these were set as tasks to the children at the start of a Literature Circle gathering. At other times some participants would draw something of their own accord and share with the group or hand it to me. The performative responses, in contrast, were mostly spontaneous reactions to the readings of the picturebooks. At times my requests asking them to act out certain expressions or sounds would also be spontaneous and unpremeditated, which added to the excitement and at times the happy unpredictability of the gatherings.

The artwork provided as much insight to the children's thoughts and feelings as their oral responses. In most cases I asked the children to describe and reflect on their own artwork. Scholars like Morgan (2007), Robson (2010, 2016) and Tanner and Jones (2007) have used 'reflective dialogue' technique to get children to respond by looking at video recordings of themselves while doing different activities. Pramling (1988) found that such 'metacognitive dialogues' with children aged five–six resulted in positive development of the children's awareness of their own learning and thinking. Schraw, Crippen and Hartley (2006) concur, proposing that use of video can support children's metacognitive development. I used a mix of both 'video elicitation' (Jewitt 2012) and reflection on artwork with the children to understand their thoughts behind their creations, as well at help children become metacognitively aware of their own thoughts and feelings during the activity.

At the same time these tasks served to vary the activities in the Literature Circle gatherings, which kept the young participants curious, interested and engaged. Often the artwork reflected their thoughts from outside the school times. This gave me reason to believe that the children were thinking of the books, the stories and the discussions even once the meetings were over. They serendipitously became tools of data-capture outside the school, giving a glimpse of their personalities, interests and hobbies at home and beyond, even though my project was physically limited within the school boundary.

4.4 Stages of the fieldwork and chronology

I conducted the fieldwork at the same site over a period of 12 months. During this time I carried out three phases of data collection. This section broadly outlines a description of each phase. For ease of understanding, I have attached a table providing a chronology and timeline of my fieldwork engagement with the school, teachers, the participants and their parents as an appendix (Appendix 4).

4.4.1 Methods used in all three phases

Each phase of the fieldwork had its own particular features; however, the basic format and selection of activities remained largely the same. The following is a list of methods used to gather data in all the three phases:

1. Creation of separate Literature Circles of P1 and P2 pupils to promote collaborative group discussions and allow me to observe their engagement with and responses to the text.
2. A 'walkthrough' of books (detailed in McAdam & Farrar 2014, p 26)
3. Verbal and visual response through talk, drawing and colouring, and enactment of book themes with the emphasis on emotional engagement with the characters
4. Audio recording of Literature Circle discussions and one-to-one interviews
5. Recording visual enactments and dramatisation of texts and storylines as part of classroom pedagogic practice.
6. Memo proforma to be used as a reflective summary as well as to make observation notes.
7. Listing of tasks to be done at home and brought back to researcher

4.4.2 Phase I (pilot study)

Since this was a longitudinal study, it was important to have a pilot phase before committing to the chosen methods for the entire duration of the study. Pilot studies are useful in that they allow researchers to carry out a part of the intended full study on a smaller and more manageable scale. They allow researchers to test elements of the proposed study with a view to reduce possible risks (Arain et al. 2010). In addition to the above, I intended to use this as a practice run for conducting fieldwork with children. At the time of planning the first phase, my daughter was roughly of the same age as the proposed participants of my study. I read to her daily and on occasions explored some of

the Emily Gravett books used in this study. However, these readings were all done in an informal basis and were impromptu, which made it difficult for me to record (audio or video) any of our reading sessions. Despite having read books with my daughter, I did not have much experience of interacting with other young children of her age as a part of a formal study, with the aim of collecting research data. Thus I needed to make sure that I was able to connect with the young participants and get them interested in the books and the activities. It was one of my predicted challenges, which I will discuss later in the chapter. There *were* a couple of instances where I read books out to young children, however they were carried out more as an interested parent rather than in the formal capacity as a researcher. I will discuss these instances, and my reflections on them, a little later in this chapter.

However, once I completed my 'pilot' study, I realised that the duration, the activities, my observations and the events conducted before and after the pilot were too valuable and extensive for me to treat the experience like a trial. I decided to consider it the first phase of the fieldwork, assimilating my learnings and incorporating them in the design of the next two phases.

4.4.3 Details of Phase I study

I started the first phase of the study with nine students from Primary 1 and Primary 2 classes. The children were all bilingual/multilingual (speaking Urdu, Punjabi and in one case Portuguese) with a wide range of English competency. This phase took place over a month and involved two weekly sessions. Participants attended nine sessions of 30-40 mins each, held in a quiet room. Children were encouraged (through researcher example) to respond in both English and their first language. Sessions were audio recorded with a few of them video-recorded to capture pupil enactments of the dramatised plots of the texts. Recording classroom events is accepted pedagogic practice, with recordings often played back to the participants as means of reinforcement and self-evaluation. For participant safety and confidentiality, video recorded data was transcribed in situ, in the school, after sessions. Involved teachers were debriefed at the end of every session, and highlights of the day shared.

The first week I gathered all nine children together in a room and shared with them the picturebooks. The three books were introduced to the children in order of complexity and sophistication of the metafictive devices used. However after forming the Literature Circle, I quickly realised that the group was too big for me to manage. I was unable to hear everyone's replies or responses. In addition, I was further unable to capture each participant's responses

on my digital recording device. The size of the group lead to another complication, which I did not realise until a later time when I started transcribing the recordings. When I started to transcribe, I realised that I was unable to match the voices to the participants. I did not know which voice belonged to whom, primarily because they were often talking over one another, as well as not talking directly into the recorder, which led to poor quality sound capture. The third reason was that I was unfamiliar with the children's recorded voices and was simply unable to recognise the voices.

Despite these hurdles, I believe that this first phase of the study was an important and significant stage of my fieldwork. The detailed planning and thorough structure of the study also made it easy for me to capture all the relevant and important data. This is why I have transcribed the data from this phase and analysed it. I discovered that I have already started to answer some of my research questions and the data analysis pointed me to new directions of thought and enquiry.

4.4.3.1 Involvement of teachers and parents

While it is accepted that children nowadays are born into this new age of communication where they are likely to be exposed to variety of text types, encountering the postmodern phenomena like multiple and fractured narratives, intertextual references through digital platforms like YouTube videos and online games, parents, and even teachers at times, might not be wholly comfortable with these new forms of text and literacies. As discussed earlier, Kress and van Leeuwen differentiate between old visual literacy and new visual literacy (2006) and parents and teachers are often more confortable with the old forms of literacy. While the needs of the curriculum and moral responsibility as parents and teachers require us to support and engage our children in their development as multiliterate readers, parents and teachers themselves might need instruction and need support to help their children. While the structure of this fieldwork did not leave much room to extend beyond the school and engage deeply with the participants' parents, I did share my methods and practices with teachers. In the following paragraphs I outline my interaction with the teachers and the parents before and after implementation of fieldwork.

4.4.3.2 Before starting – Meeting with teachers

I ran the project proposal past the Head Teacher and teachers whose pupils were likely to be involved in the study. I took their feedback and thoughts into account when designing the plan for the project, as well as the timings and frequency of the sessions. I shared the

Emily Gravett picturebooks with the teachers so that they could familiarise themselves with the books as well as share the books with the class if they had the time. I also informed them about the activities I would conduct with the participants. All these steps were taken with two considerations in mind. The first was to keep the teachers 'in the loop' of the project so that they felt involved and valued as helpers as well as gatekeepers. The second reason was to ensure that they were well informed and capable of dealing with any queries that the participant children might have after the Literature Circle meetings. This would assure the children that the teachers knew, supported and approved of the project. At the same time, the teachers would be able to field any queries made by the non-participant pupils in the class. As this was not a whole class project, the rest of the pupils might feel left out. In an attempt to compensate, I used every opportunity through which some of the experiences and learnings from my project could be shared with, cascaded to or replicated for the rest of the class.

4.4.3.3 Before starting – meeting with parents

In addition to discussing my project with the Head Teacher and teachers, I met the parents of the selected students so they had an understanding of the aims of the project. The parents were supportive of the idea and pleased for their children to participate. At the same time they had questions about book selection: they wanted to know why I was working with picturebooks and why not with more 'advanced' books which had more words. From my meeting with them, I gleaned that the parents came from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and most of them leaned towards the old forms of literacy, which emphasise competencies in reading, writing and numeracy. These concerns were especially voiced by parents who were EAL speakers themselves (I had supplied Plain Language Statements to them translated into Urdu), and wanted their children to have the best speaking and written competency in English. I assured them that the aims of the project are in keeping with the Curriculum for Excellence, which is followed by the school and would act as additional support for the children and only help them. At the same time one of the sub-aims of the project was that the children increase their vocabulary about emotions and feelings, which would help increase their written and verbal repertoire.

The parents were supportive of any project-related homework that I assigned to the participants and agreed to help the children complete their tasks. They expressed an interest in knowing the findings of the project and any follow-up activity I might conduct. Overall, engaging with the parents was a positive experience.

4.4.3.4 Post Phase I dissemination

After concluding the first phase of the fieldwork, I submitted a project report to the school's Head Teacher to be shared with the relevant class teachers as well as other teachers who might be interested.

I also disseminated my initial findings through a workshop for interested staff. This hour-long workshop was attended by most of the teachers of the school along with the Head Teacher. I shared the participant's reactions and experiences in addition to sharing different methods of exploiting the picturebook resources used in my project.

My project, as explained earlier, did not reach beyond the school and involve parents and families. However, the use of the children's mother tongue allowed them to bring their home culture and knowledge into school. While funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al. 2005), which can be accessible through interaction with the parents, were not directly available, the children, through their use of mother tongue brought in links with their home cultures and funds of domestic and linguistic cultures and practices.

4.4.4 Phase II

For the second phase, I made some alterations to the methods listed at the beginning of this section. I had thought that steps like the walkthrough of books wouldn't be needed, because they were already familiar with the books. However, the second round of walkthrough also proved interesting. Rereading the books in the second phase helped add new perspectives to the initial readings, assimilate new information and find new meanings. This became particularly relevant and pertinent to these complex texts with their wealth of metafictive features (as discussed in the previous chapter) that afford transmediation by inviting repeated readings and offering multiple collaborative meaning-making opportunities (Sipe 1998). Also, according to the plan of my longitudinal study, the second phase was conducted after 3 months of completion of the first. The participants had forgotten some of the features of the books. Going through the books page by page jogged their memory and brought back instant recall of the highlights of the books. For these reasons the walkthrough of all the books in the second phase was necessary and relevant.

4.4.5 Phase III

Sharing the books with the rest of the class:

Through out the fieldwork process, I took several opportunities to recommend to the class

teachers to share the texts and some of the project related activities with the whole class, so the rest of the class was included in the experience to a certain extent. In this final phase, one of the highlights of the Literature Circle activities was when each participant child selected one book to share with their whole class. This was a testament to the increased confidence the children showed while interacting with the complex picturebook. In addition it demonstrated the benefits of prolonged interaction with the picturebooks, which I will discuss in the later chapters. Most noticeable was the sense of ownership children felt towards the books themselves. They felt the sense of responsibility in sharing their own interpretation of the books and key moments and helped untangle the multimodal meanings from the texts. The rest of the class enjoyed this unique experience of being led by their classmate on a walkthrough of the books.

Feedback and outcomes from the project were shared with the school teachers as well as with the pupils. I had originally planned to hold a debriefing session and picturebook workshop for the parents which ultimately was not possible due to the busy schedule of the school year. I, however, presented my project highlights to the teachers and Head Teacher and shared best practices, materials and resources for continuity of the successful aspects of the project. Findings were also shared with the Glasgow EAL network of school teachers via TEACHmeets and via the SATEAL network where I conducted a workshop for interested practitioners. I also disseminated findings through other national and international conference presentations.

4.5 Ethics

Earlier in the chapter I outlined my axiological beliefs about working with children, and how they have informed every step of my research project. Ethical issues are important to consider to safeguard all human participants especially issues surrounding harm, consent, deception and the privacy and confidentiality of data (Christians 2005). Researchers like Miles, Huberman and Saldana, in their book on Qualitative Data Analysis (2014), have raised a number of related issues including researcher competence, research integrity and honesty and trust and intervention and advocacy. Yet others like Hill (2005) have emphasised that the research should be beneficial to the participants, directly or indirectly, by either contributing to their well-being or by increasing adult understanding about issues relevant to children. My study with its focus on multimodal literacies and increased

affective engagement is both informative for adults as well as directly beneficial to children who participate.

I received ethical clearance from the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee on two separate occasions: for the first phase and for the second and third phases combined, both times with no queries or recommended changes (attached as Appendices 5 & 6). As mentioned earlier, PLS statements and consent forms (attached as Appendices 7, 8, 9 and 10) were handed to the respective teachers, parents and the participant children, with translated forms provided for parents who were not comfortable reading English. It was agreed that the school and the participants would not be identified through any future dissemination of my study and its findings. Every criterion set out by the Ethics Committee was met with the earnest aim to protect the participants from harm and discomfort. Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of the children and the fieldwork site masked in relevant documents. Despite this, I am aware that the dynamics between the school and parents almost always privilege the school (Cummins 2000). It is possible, in the case of my study, once the children were nominated by the class teachers, parents might have felt obliged to sign the consent forms. Parents who come from other cultures and are speakers of English as an additional language and their children, especially, might feel further obligated to participate in programmes offered by the school (Crump & Phipps 2013).

Armed with this awareness, when I embarked on my research fieldwork, I made both subtle and overt efforts at every stage to make the activities equitable and democratic. I sought the opinion of the participants on the activities and let the majority in the group decide. Often the children had autonomy regarding the activities used in the Literature Circle. While I am aware that this was not complete autonomy, this was the closest the participants could come to having decision-making powers during the fieldwork. At the same time this also became a demonstration of my ethical and axiological beliefs informing the design and implementation of the research.

4.6 Iterative reflections and challenges

During the fieldwork I maintained a handwritten journal, logging my observations, thoughts and reflections on each session and meeting. These notes were different from the formal recordings and transcriptions in that the journal was there to aid and jog my memory as well as support the analysis of the captured data. It is through reading these notes that some of my experiences were highlighted as challenges that I had to overcome

or work around. I include here some of the reflections which caused me the most concern and used significant reserves of my creative energy to overcome.

Issues of authority and identity

One of the initial concerns that I had for my fieldwork was that I was unsure how to interact with the children in the Literature Circle. I wanted them to enjoy participating in the project and have a degree of autonomy in how they participated and how much they contributed. At the same time, I knew that I needed to achieve my research aims, which meant keeping to a schedule and abiding by a certain structure. My concern was that this might serve to put them off participating in the study. Simply put, I was caught between being 'teacherly' and more flexible. This is evident in some of the Literature Circle recordings as well, where a significant amount of my time went into group management. I had to keep shifting spaces and identities playing 'fun book lady', session conductor and peacekeeper all at once.

In trying to traverse these roles, there were times when I was unable to acknowledge certain lines of responses from certain children. This was due to a number of possible reasons: like a participant speaking softly, or simultaneous responses with one overshadowing the other, or a commotion distracting me. I noticed these valuable and relevant responses only later when going over the audio recordings and the transcripts. In the end, the rapport I built with the children helped me to create a balanced atmosphere. In addition, my decision to make the groups smaller also helped in managing the group interactions better.

The children's perception of me as a researcher became even more complicated because they knew my daughter was about the same age as them. During one of the first Literature Circle sessions, Saanvi accompanied (with permission from the school) me due to issues with her childcare arrangements. The participants' view of me as a parent in addition to being the researcher appeared to have problematized my identity even more for them. They often asked me questions about Saanvi on the days she was not present. While this was the reality of my positionality as the researcher, nevertheless, changing the various identity hats, often in quick succession, was at times challenging.

Group dynamics and handling resources

The challenge of handling group dynamics was further intensified by the tactile nature of the picturebooks themselves. To ensure that the group was experiencing the book at the

same time, I conducted the walkthrough with them with one book in the centre to be shared or held up by me. Because the books invite tactile engagement, it was natural for the children to move up closer so they could touch and feel the pages, leading to ever decreasing circles. I had to repeatedly ask them to spread out so the others had equal opportunity of seeing and touching the books. Once the walkthrough was over, I circumvented this hurdle by supplying one book to a pair of readers, which worked in a much fairer and equitable way.

The problem of the shifting location of the children as well as the ever-decreasing circles of participants meant that the digital recording device had be positioned accordingly each time they moved. This was not a problem in itself since the recorder was small and portable, but in the recordings, the irregularity of the voices become apparent – at times some participant heard more and at other times their voice are completely lost. This could have been circumvented by attaching individual microphones and recorders to each child, however it would have taken away from the group endeavour of the Literature Circles as well as appeared somewhat invasive. There were also a number of occasions initially where I could hear my voice over everyone else's because of how the recorder had been placed. In the later recordings I am more aware of these minor issues and took care of the recorder placements during the Literature Circles. I played back some of the recordings to the participants and they heard the inconsistent recordings. Over time they too became aware of the recorder positioning and remembered to speak into the recorder. A way to overcome this was to introduce the recorder as 'Mr iPad', and the children were asked to say hello to Mr. iPad and remember to 'include' him in conversations. With some of the children taking responsibility to be heard clearly, in the later sessions, the voices are more clearly audible and discernible. This led to a related challenge concerning who had control of the recording devices, with every child wanting to be the one 'in charge'. I overcame this by assigning monitors in every session who would be responsible of ensuring the devices were properly handled as well as switched on and off at the precise times.

Multilingual responses

One of the bigger challenges was that children did not seem very keen to use their mother tongues in the Literature Circles, despite the fact that I would use Hindi/Urdu in my interactions with them. As I will discuss in my findings chapter later, I believed that it was because they are not comfortable speaking in any language other than English within the school precincts. Ideally, I would have liked them to use more Urdu/Hindi/Punjabi in their

responses but ethically I was committed to make them feel safe and comfortable while participating in the project and therefore encouraged them to reply in any mode and language they preferred.

4.7 My position as a parent researcher and previous experience of working with children

While I chose to work with bilingual children of a school-going age (5 to 7 years) for ease of access and availability, my experience as a young mother was the key reason for me to choose younger children rather than other empirical subjects (like adolescents or parents of book readers, for instance). My daughter Saanvi was just over three years old when I started my PhD studies. She was interested in books and due to my interest in picturebooks, she came across a variety of titles which were not usually available in her nursery or local public library. Along the course of my research studies, I presented her with the selected books and made notes on her responses, which I have referred to at different points in my findings and discussions. While I was not formally conducting research with my daughter, her reactions and reflections on the texts did help and guide my understanding of other children her age. In addition, the fact that she was growing up bilingual in Scotland also helped me appreciate the factors that affect bi/multilingual children getting educated in an EAL environment.

I would also like to note here that I did have some previous experience of reading picturebooks to children of my daughter's age. Due to the fact that I contemplated conducting fieldwork with young children, I tried to familiarize myself exploring books with that age group of children whenever the opportunity presented itself, be they Saanvi's friends or nursery batch mates (with the necessary permissions from parents and nursery teachers). My daughter and her friends were around 4 years old at this time. I noticed that they were curious about the books but once they had cursorily explored the books from cover to cover, their interest would wane. If I tried to follow it up with some scaffolded reading, often they would skip away to other toys and books. Being in the informal and convivial environment of the home, it did not feel suitable for me to press them for their attention.

I have had further similar experiences of reading to preschool children, albeit in a slightly

more structured environment. Before the commencement of Phase I of my fieldwork, I had two opportunities to read picturebooks with nursery-aged children. Saanvi's nursery Head Teacher, was keen to involve me in the nursery's parent reading group. This resulted in two separate occasions on which I went in to the nursery to read books to some of the children. I read fairytales from big books the first time and read some Gravett titles on the second occasion. From my experience of reading with the nursery-aged (3-5 years old) children I have three major observations to make. The first was that the children were pre-literate in that they were at an age when they could not read the picturebooks on their own. Their literacy skills were limited to writing their names and numbers 1 – 10. This meant that they would not be able to understand the puns and visual-verbal interplay, which is an important element of Gravett's books. The second observation was that the children, due to their young age would find it hard to verbalise their reactions to the picturebooks. Their drawing and art skills are also at an initial level, which might not have produced directly relevant and meaningful visual responses. Finally, I observed that pre-school age children have shorted attention spans, making it difficult to read the chosen picturebooks in a focused manner. During my reading experience with the nursery children, children would often get up and walk away from a reading session, while some others would drift into my reading circle mid-reading. While this was the informality and friendly atmosphere that the nursery aimed for, it could lead to logistical hurdles for me. If the participant children were to leave or join the Literature Circle in the middle of a book reading or a discussion, my digital recordings would have to be altered to account for missing or extra participants. It was for these reasons that I chose to focus on early school-aged children. However it was just that given my particular circumstances, I did not find it feasible to work with younger children. Successful qualitative research has been conducted with younger children as detailed in Gregory (1996), Coulthard (2003) and in Arizpe and Styles (2003/2016).

4.8 Working with the data: Transcription, translation and data analysis

As mentioned earlier, the research data was collected through reflective logs in my research journal, field notes and observations, transcripts of interviews and Literature Circle recordings along with the children's visual responses to the texts. All of these resources are considered together for creating knowledge creatively through experience (Connelly & Clandinin 1990). The digital recording of the sessions, along with the

interviews and video recordings, lead to a large number of recorded hours. These, once transcribed, formed the primary source of research data, which was analysed thematically. The themes included visual, emotional and critical literacies, and these were analysed using theories of reader response, multimodality and cognitive literary criticism, which is discussed in detail in the following sections.

A small yet significant percentage of the children's responses were in Urdu and Punjabi. I translated them into English, keeping in mind the contextual nuances and explaining the meaning in the transcripts. I was careful to translate not only the words and sentences but also the cultural connotations of the responses.

There was a significant amount of children's work produced as a result of the visual responses during the Literature Circle sessions including cutting and sticking craftwork, drawing and colouring in sketches and the children reimagining the book spreads. These came together to support the activities and discussions recorded in the transcripts. In most cases, the children described what their artwork meant. These descriptions along with the artwork themselves were then analysed and interpreted holistically using the lenses of multimodality and cognitive criticism. I devote the next three sections revisiting the research questions and explaining the data analysis framework.

4.9 'Moments of intensity' – building on 'moments of affect' and 'critical incidents'

Each book elicited a range of different responses based on the discussion questions and the activities. Taking a longitudinal view of the whole data, it became apparent to me that the strongest responses were clustered around certain double spreads or certain scenes in each book. These scenes, which can be considered highpoints in the visual or verbal narrative, generated more responses, more animated and emotional discussions and more controversy than some of the other pages. Due to the high degree of emotional engagement caused by these 'scenes' and the affective nature of children's responses, I have adopted the term 'moments of intensity' to describe these scenes.

Medina and Perry (2014) use the term 'moment of affect' in a similar manner in particular relation to performative responses within the context of theatre, a movement known as the 'affective turn in Social Sciences' (Perry 2017, email correspondence, 10 July 2017). Readers or performers experience these affective moments when 'the body comes into

contact with other forces' (Medina & Perry 2014, p 120). In the realm of children's literature, McAdam and Farrar have recently used the notion of 'specific points of affect' while exploring picturebooks with teachers using methods of drama engagement (2014 p.7). Other scholars have investigated affective experiences and evaluated them based on the length of the 'moment' as well as the 'emotional intensity' (Fredrickson 2000; Schäfer, Zimmermann & Sedlmeier 2014; Varey & Kahneman 1992). Based on my initial explorations in the domain of psychology in Chapter 2, I have touched briefly upon the 'thinking' brain (cognition) and the 'feeling' brain (affect). In there, I acknowledge that while some scholars raise contentious issues against the idea of distinct divisions between the seat of emotions and the seat of intellect and language learning, others like Oziewicz 2015 continue with the notion of brain laterality and that emotional intelligence or emotional literacy accesses the capabilities of both the brain hemispheres. My decision to use the expression 'moments of intensity' intentionally moves away from the cognitive/affective debate. For the purposes of this thesis, I have adapted the concept of 'intensity' to capture the notion of a particular moment in a book's narrative where the characters, plot, the materiality of the book as an artefact, etc., all come together and create a special and unique cognitive and affective moment for the reader (children in this case). The metafictive nature of the books make these moments even more pronounced for the reader's the experience of reading.

A similar term from the realm of reader response data analysis is '**critical incidents**' often used by scholars to highlight moments in the reading experience of readers. The term was originally used in teacher education as a reflective tool in action research to 'stand back and examine' one's own beliefs and practices critically (Newman 2000). Newman states that critical incidents can occur 'during teaching, through reading, overhearing a comment, …or suddenly seeing your own learning differently' (*ibid.*), offering important opportunities of learning about professional practice. Cliff Hodges adapted the reflective element of this concept in her 'Rivers of reading' project (2010), focussing on the reading journeys of young readers through creation of critical incident collages. These moments are characterised as important turning points for readers, or memorable experiences of reading influential books as they reflect on the course of their 'personal reading histories and bring the subject of reading to the forefront of their attention' (Cliff Hodges 2010, p 187). These critical incidents are seen as transformational in the reading trajectory of a reader, often instrumental in making them the kind of reader they eventually become in later life. Therefore this reader response technique is often used with experienced readers who can reflect on their reading histories. These critical incidents, by definition, stand out

for readers in their reading experiences over an extended length of time. This is different to how I define 'moment of intensity' in my data analysis. While both refer to a finite moment or an event viewed in retrospect, a moment of intensity is attributed to a turning point within a particular text, which elicits a strong reaction from the reader. In the experience of reading one text, there might be a number of such turning points afforded by the narrative, tactile features or any relevant metafictive device (in the case of the selected picturebooks). Also, while critical incident as defined by Cliff Hodges stressed on the readers having had a 'history' of reading, implying a somewhat extended relationship with reading and possible exposure to a variety of texts, moment of intensity does not require the reader to have an extended history of reading different texts. It focuses on the reading experience of one text at a time, with particular moments highlighted in retrospect by the reader or the researcher (myself).

4.10 Research questions, a reminder

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this study is influenced by the educational criteria set out by the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence for developing critical literacy and impacting outcomes in areas including Citizenship and Modern Languages. The design of the inquiry aims to use the selected picturebooks as 'simulation grounds' or 'training fields' to afford development of children's visual literacy and Theory of Mind (ToM) as mentioned in Chapter Two. Since the study involves bilingual children, who are learning and negotiating two languages and cultures, the enquiry also focuses on how they gain confidence in their EAL proficiency while responding to the selected metafictive texts. To this purpose, my main research objective was to establish:

How, and to what extent, can metafictive picturebooks be used as visual, verbal and emotional literacy tools for emerging bilingual readers?

To begin with, my primary aim was to explore children's existing visual language skills and emotional literacy. In addition, I also wanted to find out whether these picturebooks as a methodological tool would be appropriate for learners who are 5-6 years old. This question is subdivided further into the following questions:

Question 1: ***How do metafictive picturebooks afford reader engagement?***

Question 2: ***How do young bilingual children respond to the multimodal and metafictive features in the texts?***

Question 3: ***How do young bilingual children interact with the characters' emotional states in the narratives?***

The inquiry was conceptualised with the overarching hypothesis that appreciating characters in picturebooks gives children a better understanding of emotions and how they affect people in real life. As elaborated in Section Three of Chapter Two, identifying with fictional characters and contexts also help children in constructing their own identities as they see literature mirroring their own situations and personalities, as explained by the mirrors, windows and doors metaphor (Sims Bishop 1990). The study is rooted in the socialisation potential of literature: reading well-selected works of literature can make children, especially those who are acclimatizing to a new language and culture, feel better accepted in and adjusted to society. While it would have been useful and ground-breaking to monitor and show an improvement in emotional literacy or empathy demonstrated by the children, measuring emotional literacy before and after an intervention like this is a highly specialised aspect of social psychology, which is beyond the scope of this project. The methods adopted by this study have shed light on children's awareness of emotions and their engagement with the textual characters and highlighted the many affordances of complex picturebooks like the ones selected.

Analysis criteria

The data collection methods were designed with the research questions in mind. Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and conducting 'multiple iterative readings' of the whole data set (Arizpe et al. 2014, p 88) I derived the following conceptual categories that I used in my data analysis:

- Recognition of metafiction/intertextuality/self-reflexivity
- Interpreting multimodality
- Recognising emotions/ emotional awareness [further divided into colours, expressions, emotion ekphrasis]
- Awareness of cultural differences when responding to the picturebooks
- Awareness of own bilinguality and EAL proficiency when reading and responding to the picturebooks.
- Critical awareness/literacy

These thematic categories and criteria were developed from the verbal and visual data gathered from all the activities conducted during the Literature Circle sessions, especially oral discussions based around the books.

4.11 Analysis frameworks

Data analysis for this study is based on established qualitative methods for analysing conversations involving coding which establishes conceptual categories. This is based on an interpretive model of qualitative data analysis, where 'the basic task of data analysis is to generate assertions that vary in scope and level of inference, largely through induction, and to establish an evidentiary warrant for the assertions one wishes to make' (Erickson 1986, p 146). As a starting point for an analysis framework, I adopted Sipe's detailed typology of reader response (2008). Based on longstanding research into contemporary young children's literary understanding, he developed five main categories with each category being further refined into sub-categories:

1. Analytical
    A. Making narrative meaning
    B. The book as made object or cultural product
    C. The language of the text
    D. Analysis of illustrations and other visual matter, and
    E. Relationships between fiction and reality
2. Intertextual
3. Personal
4. Transparent, and
5. Performative

Each of these categories and subcategories have been further subdivided, though Sipe has noted that most of the responses, about 70%, can be classified under the category 1A – 'Making narrative meaning' (Sipe 2008, p 90). In-depth examination of my dataset showed a similar result. Children were trying to make sense of the narrative so a considerable portion of the discussions was spent in collaborative meaning making (Short 2011). This was particularly true of the first phase, where the children were encountering and exploring the books for the first time.

While Sipe noted that 'culture shapes, constrains, and enables literary response' (Sipe 1999, p 126) in multifarious ways and that different cultural backgrounds leads to a range of culturally situated response, his categories do not make space for such an eventuality. Arizpe et al (2014) note that there are no categories in 'his [Sipe's] model that refer to the

interaction between readers of different cultures to a text' (p 89). This current study, where children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds have participated, has a number of culturally situated responses as well as responses in languages other than English, which defied neat categorisation in Sipe's model.

Indeed several more categories showed overlaps, making me unsure about the way to classify the data. A particular instance was the 'text to life' and 'life to text' sub-categories under the Personal category, where the data showed overlaps with 1B 'The book as made object or cultural product' and 1E 'Relationships between fiction and reality'.

Responses in which children were talking about mental states, emotions and affective reactions were included under Sipe's 'Transparent' category. However there were partial overlaps with the Personal and the Analytical categories, particularly 1A, 'Making narrative meaning'. I realised at this stage that while I had classified the data into more and more refined categories, there was a need to use some larger categories, which would bring together the data into meaningful links instead of separating it into smaller and smaller specialist categories.

The three different teams working with the wordless book *The Arrival* in the *Visual Journeys Through Wordless Narratives* project (Arizpe et al. 2014) reported a similar experience. They navigated the challenge by reworking Sipe's categories into four larger and interlinking categories: a) Referential, b) Personal, c) Compositional and d) Intertextual (*ibid*., p 93). For a detailed explanation of each term refer to the table below. This framework, while conflating Sipe's sub-categories according to organically linking fields, also takes account of different levels of response – the literal and the inferential – accommodating both simple/literal and complex/elaborate connections made by the respondents. According to the authors, a 'literal response that implies a straightforward identification or description, or the establishment of simple connections' whereas an inferential response 'implies a deeper, more subtle reading and interpretation where the connections are more elaborate and play a more central function in making sense of the text' (*ibid.*, p 94).

Levels of Response: → Process of Response: ↓	**Literal statements (Identification, description and simple connections)**	**Inferential statements (elaborate, interpretive and/or symbolic connections)**
Referential	Identification and description of the elements of the narrative and images (the story)	Interpretation of the elements of the narrative and images (the story)
Personal	Simple connections: Text to life/life to text	Elaborate connections: text to life/life to text
Compositional	Identification and description of textual categories	Interpretation of textual categories
Intertextual	Simple connections to other texts; media; cultural references	Elaborate connections to other texts; media; cultural references

Table 4. 2 Source: Visual Journey's analytical framework, 2014, p 93

However, this model does not leave room for performative responses, which Sipe had included in his model. The 'Performative' category was relevant for the data set emerging from the current study since an important portion of the participants' responses took the form of spontaneous performances and enactments of the characters' actions and words. For the purposes of this enquiry, I have adapted the *Visual Journey's* model to include Sipe's 'Performative' category. To incorporate the cognitive element into this framework, I have expanded the 'Compositional' category to include the elements of visual grammar – vector, framing, perspective, placement, size, line and colour – in addition to the sub-category of emotion ekphrasis. Emotion ekphrasis, as previously explained is the external expressions of emotion by a character, be it through words, facial expressions, gestures, postures etc. Interpreting or reading emotion ekphrasis is central to the understanding of another person or character's mental state and gauging their ToM as asserted by recent studies (Alsup 2015; Berns et al. 2013; Kidd and Castano 2013), a crucial aim for this enquiry.

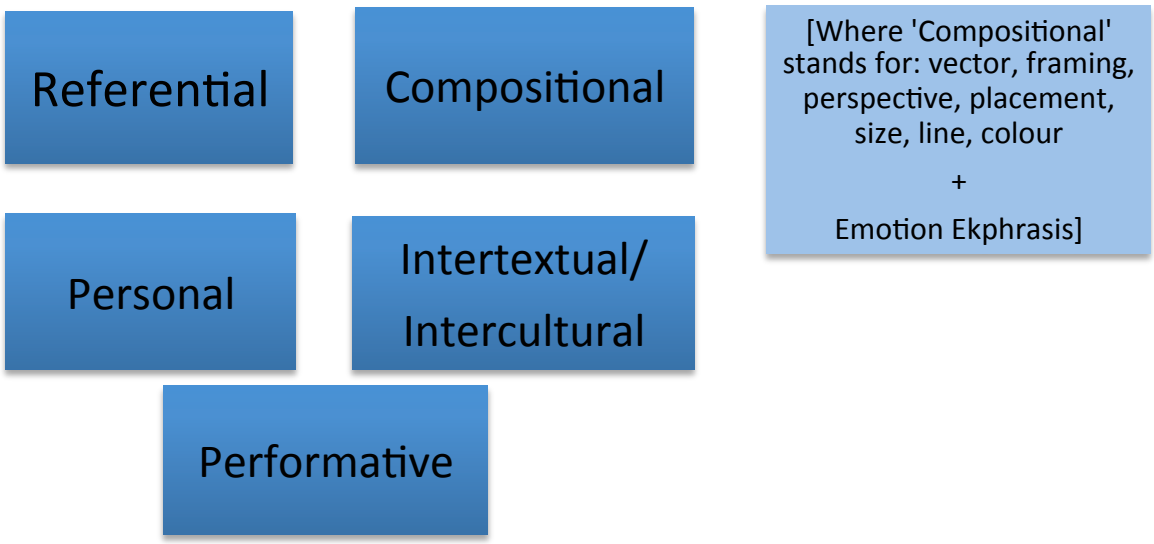

Figure 4. 1 Data analysis categories and the framework adapted from *Visual Journeys Through Wordless Narratives* project (Arizpe et al. 2014).

Arizpe and co-authors define the 'Intertextual' category as 'responses that refer to either other media or relate aspects of the imaginary worlds portrayed in the images to cultural references' (2014, p 93). The cultural references in my study are more pronounced and obvious, firstly, as bilingual responses during the discussions including the points where they use their mother tongue; and secondly, as references to their home cultures. Thus I found it necessary to highlight the intercultural nature of this category, by a simple elaboration of the model, as demonstrated in the figure above.

The following table shows the criteria I used to analyse the data for emotional awareness incorporating both visual grammar and cognitive elements into the rubric:

Processes of Response	Details of the response	How they showed awareness of emotions on the page
Referential	Identification, description or interpretation of the elements of the narrative and images (the story)	Interpreting the text/ Immersive or empathic identification
Personal	Connections text-to-life/life-to-text	If they remembered or correlated real life and the text
Compositional	Identification, description or interpretation of textual categories	Describing and interpreting 'emotion ekphrasis' and visual grammar (colour, size, vector, framing etc.)
Intertextual/Intercultural	Connections to other texts; media; cultural references	Mention of other texts/photos/art + Use of home language ('Translanguaging')
Performative	How the text acted as a springboard for creativity	Responding through actions/enactment

Table 4. 3 The visual/cognitive analysis rubric

I have used the above table as the guiding criteria to organise the data during the analysis, which I will refer to when needed in the following three chapters where I discuss findings relevant to each picturebook.

Roads not taken

I have debated with myself as well as with my supervisors about the merits of adopting one process of analysis and presentation of findings over another. My initial idea was to analyse the data by phase. It seemed to be a systematic method of negotiating a large amount of data that would have also allowed me to monitor the developments in the responses and skills of the respondents. However, it would have meant focussing on the timelines of the fieldwork interventions as opposed to the narrative of the books, with a likelihood of prioritising the sequence of the activities rather than highlighting the thematic analysis and findings from each story. This would have made the analysis somewhat mechanical as well as not entirely focussed on the aims of the research.

Another thought that persistently occurred to me, particularly while going through the data from the first phase, is the occasional differences in the literacy standards of children from Primary One (P1) and Primary Two (P2) classes. Due to the P1 children ranking lower on the EAL evaluation scale of proficiency in English, their responses, understandably, were based more from visual decoding rather than linguistic decoding. These differences prompted me to consider treating the age and the class level of the P1 and P2 participants as chief differentiating criteria and highlight through my analysis the differences in the children's responses in each phase, as an internal comparison parameter. However, by the second phase, there was more homogeneity than differences between the responses of the younger and older children. Such differentiating criteria would have been hard to maintain and even more difficult to justify; ultimately, this course of action would not have appropriately addressed the research aims.

Keeping in mind the constraints of space and time, I have made subjective decisions about the moments that are selected for analysis. It is entirely possible that another researcher might choose to highlight other aspects of the data, but my selection is based on my knowledge of the children and the research criteria mentioned earlier. It was a 'lightbulb' moment mixed with a sense of relief when I came upon the idea of organising the analysis based around the 'moments of intensity' which relates to the children's emotional engagement with the narrative. These 'moments' can be linked with the analysis criteria mentioned earlier. These criteria give an understanding of the development of the children's responses across the three phases. Therefore, the moments, the criteria and the children's responses are triangulated holistically to put forward the findings for each picturebook.

For each of the three findings chapters, I note the special scenes/episodes, the 'moments of intensity,' and a summary and analysis of children's responses surrounding that scene followed by the findings. For the most part, the scene is discussed accompanied with a picture, or a description of it (in case the spread cannot be reproduced for lack of permissions).

4.12 Chapter summary and moving forward

This chapter effectively is of two halves: the first half provided an insight into the methodology and the second half provided the theoretical framework adopted for the research. Starting with the philosophical and theoretical stances supporting this study, I

explained the methodology adopted in this research. Subsequently, I presented the details of the fieldwork, with the hope of clarifying the stages of this study for transparency and ease of replicating, in aid of research validity and reliability. Next, I mentioned some of the challenges I faced in the implementation of the methods, in the data-handling processes as well as during the ethical application process. In the next section I presented the details of the participants, how they were recruited and the considerations I had to keep in mind while engaging them in the research project. The last three sections of the chapter detail the theoretical framework used for coding and analysing the data. The next chapter starts presenting the findings from the discussions around the first book, *Wolves*.

Chapter 5 Analysis of *Wolves*

As explained in the overview of my research methodology, I have adopted a longitudinal study design using three selected picturebooks, recording the children's interaction with them over the length of a school year. I presented the books sequentially to the children and in this chapter I document the findings from the first of these texts. As I have explained in Chapter Three, the books have their own special individual characteristics and were able to hold the interest of the children during repeated readalouds and discussion sessions in the Literature Circles across the three phases.

5.1 Wolves

Wolves was the first book that was introduced to the group at the start of the Literature Circle sessions. I had seen the children on a few occasions already, so they knew about my project and the fact that we were going to be on our own in a different room to discuss interesting books. At this first book group meeting, there were nine children from P1 and P2 classes plus Saanvi, who was 'in character', as the tenth participant.

Before commencement of the fieldwork, I had given a lot of consideration to the order in which I ought to introduce the books to the children. Finally, I decided to introduce *Wolves* as the first picturebook because it had a story, something the children would enjoy and remember. Of the three selected picturebooks, both *Wolves* and *Again!* have stories in the traditional form – a narrative that involves certain characters and has a beginning, middle and an end. The third, *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts* is more episodic in nature where we see Little Mouse having different encounters with scary entities. [Refer to chapter 3 for a detailed description and content analysis of the three picturebooks.] *Wolves* is a sophisticated artefact which has tactile features as well as a narrative that works on multiple levels. It has the 'shock and awe' factor that I wanted to present to the children to get them interested right from the outset. From the following analysis it will become evident that my initial instinct was right, and that this picturebook delivered on each of my researcher's expectations from the participants' responses.

As this was my first 'walkthrough' and Literature Circle discussion, I prepared myself with a list of prompt questions, some of which are listed below:

- What do you think the rabbit is doing? Where is he?
- How do you think he is feeling? Curious? Happy?

- Why does he want to read about wolves?
- Where is the wolf? Inside the story?/ Outside…?
- What do you think the wolves/wolf is doing?
- How do you think we should treat library books?
- Why is the book all scratched and ripped up?
- What do you think happened to the rabbit?
- Does it [pointing to a picture/scene] remind you of anything? What?

Some of these prompt questions were used on more than one occasion where appropriate. It was easy to get carried away with the enthusiasm of the children and their insightful responses, so having this list of prompts kept me on track. The first session was a slow walkthrough, which familiarised the children with the book. At the same time they were able to respond to some of the features and narrative highlights.

In the next section of the chapter I begin examining each important scene and moment of affect and support the analysis with quotations from the transcripts. I use the children's pseudonyms when quoting them. Brackets – '[]' – are used to make notes on the children's responses or for any qualifying explanation added later by me. There are a few places where I have included Saanvi's responses too, in parenthesis. Quotations from the text are written in bold lettering.

5.1.1 Astonishing endpapers

The book, *Wolves*, by virtue of its unusual endpapers, generated much astonishment, confusion and debate. The peritextual features including the endpapers, the images that were not easily decipherable and gaps between the verbal and the visual text gave rise to a number of questions. The participants asked such questions as: Why is the book called *Wolves* but has a rabbit's photo on the cover? Why are there two covers – the first one white and the second one red? What is the brown furry background that has the letters stuck to it?

The doormat on which the flyers about the new book in the library and the mail is lying, is a culturally specific visual since in most Asian/Pakistani houses, the post gets deposited in a letter box instead of getting delivered through a slit in the door. Perhaps this is the reason the children were unable to decipher the second spread as the brown doormat. It was also made more confusing by the similarity with the wolf's fur on the first spread.

5.4.1.1 'Book-talk' – critical awareness about picturebook conventions

As is the nature of Literature Circle discussions, the initial time spent with a book generates a lot of comments about the narrative and images through which the children are trying to make meaning from the text. During the first discussion on the book, while most of the comments and responses were literal rather than inferential, there were frequent overlaps between a literal meaning and an inferential one. In the example below, the participants surprised me with the quality of their 'book-talk' speaking critically about the title page and demonstrating critical awareness about the conventions of picturebooks.

> Soumi: [Pointing to the place where the author's name is written] – What is this written over here?
>
> Najab: reads out – Emily Grrabbet?
>
> Soumi: [Helps out by reading 'Gravett'.] Emily Gravett, yes. Who is Emily Gravett?
>
> (Saanvi: Rabbit)
>
> Najab: It's the person who wrote the book?
>
> Soumi: Yes absolutely!
>
> Najab: And who drawed the book?
>
> Saleem: (softly) Author
>
> Soumi: Yes you are right Saleem! Author.
>
> (First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

Both Saleem and Najab demonstrate that they know that the author is the person who writes the book, though Najab seemed to think, quite correctly, that this was the same person who 'drawed' the book too.

The first time the children encountered this book, they were asked to predict the story and possible outcomes by looking at the various endpapers. Here are some examples of predictions:

> Soumi: What do you think the story is going to be about? [Asking to predict the story, to get the discussion started. Long pause… so I try another question.]
>
> Soumi: Do you think wolves and bunnies are friends?
>
> Multiple: No
>
> Soumi: What are they?

Najab & Javed: Not friends.

Najab: Enemies

Javed [explaining]: Wolves eat rabbits. When as [sic] the rabbits can't eat the wolves.

Soumi: Aah. How did you know that? Have you read about it in any other book?

Javed: I think so.

Soumi: I think that is very clever thinking.

(First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

In an example of using their previous knowledge, and making life-to-text connections, Javed is quite certain that wolves eat rabbits and therefore are unlikely to become friends. He also knows that rabbits don't eat wolves, this shows awareness of the unequal power equations between the predator and the prey. A little later, Najab predicts that wolves in real life might attack the rabbit, and that is why Rabbit is equipping himself with tactical knowledge:

Soumi: Why do you think rabbit wants to know about wolves?

Najab: Because he likes wolves I think. Oh! Because wolves are going to eat him so he will learn how to defend.

Soumi: That's a very clever answer. Let us see what exactly the rabbit is going to find out.

(First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

Najab is seen trying out various theories to explain why the rabbit might be interested in a book about wolves, instead of being spontaneously averse to his natural predator. He isn't wholly convinced by the explanation that 'he [the rabbit] likes wolves' and finally decides that the rabbit is reading about wolves for self-defence.

In the above examples, the participants are responding literally to the textual prompts. The responses that demonstrate awareness of picturebook conventions can be categorised as 'referential' based on the visual/cognitive analysis rubric. As explained earlier it is the same as the referential category in the Visual Journeys (2014) model and influenced by Sipe's 'analytical' category that brings together clarifying questions and inferences, among other types of responses. Interestingly the question about predicting the story brings in elements of complex inference. Javed tries to explain, after inferring from the text, that wolves and rabbits are not friends. Javed is engaging his existing schema about wolves and

their prey and based on that schema, he predicts that the wolf and the rabbit cannot be friends. This is a complex inference where we see an example of a 'content' schema being activated as per the typology by Carrell and Eisterhold (1983, p 80) explained in Chapter Two in this thesis. Content schemas, to remind ourselves, relate to the background conceptual knowledge of the topic in the text. In the last excerpt, Najab too uses his schematic awareness to predict the reason why rabbit wishes to read about an animal that is its natural predator. Using the prey and predator schema, he wishes that the rabbit outwitted the wolf, which is why according to him the rabbit is reading a book about wolves.

5.4.2 Rapacious reading: At the library

The start of the story (spread four) generated a number of comments about the library as a location. A number of personal, text-to-life/ life-to-text connections were made. The children were happy to discuss their relationship and familiarity with their local libraries.

> Soumi: What's this going on here? Where is this? Where is the rabbit?
>
> Najab: Shhh. He's reading a book in the library and its written 'shhhhh'.
>
> Soumi: How do you know he's in the library?
>
> Najab: Because of the books.
>
> Najab: It is the front cover. It has got writing on it, it has a stamp on it. He got it from the library.
>
> Soumi: It has got some writing on it, it has a stamp on it.
>
> Najab: The front page of the library book
>
> Soumi: This is the front page of the library book? Isn't it? Okay, that's great. And…? Yes Saleem?
>
> Saleem: It's got a stamp on the wolf… (meaning the stamp has a wolf motif on it).
>
> (First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

They go on to say that the library has 'laptops, lots of books, books for small kids, for grown ups too.' In these initial discussions, the responses are quite literal. The children are describing what they see. They do infer that the book with the red cover is a library book. With five children reading together there is evidence of meaning making collaboratively. In a mixed ability group as this one, there is also, usually, evidence of some of the children being slightly advanced in their comprehension and meaning making skills than the others.

The individual responses in the excerpts presented here support that assertion. What follows below is an instance where Najab (P2), the most alert and engaged participant in the group, makes the observation that the Rabbit is not just reading any book of his choice, he has 'borrowed' the book from the library. He (Najab) is the first in his group to notice the evidence in the book and come to the conclusion:

> Najab: He getting a book from the library, and the book is called '*Wolves*'.
>
> Soumi: He got the book from the library and it's about the wolves? Good, thanks… What's happening on this next page? Masood? Saleem?
>
> Masood: [Silent]
>
> Saleem: Writing in the library, writing is called 'Wolves'.
>
> Naima: [Inaudible]
>
> Najab: I know I know! The bunny rabbit borrowed the book from the library.
>
> Soumi: The book the bunny rabbit borrowed from the library?
>
> Najab: Yeah, that's his hand!

(First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

Here Najab is referring to the fifth spread which shows a close up of the Rabbit's paw holding the red book cover against the background of the library. 'Borrowed' is an example of activating the library schema, which Najab demonstrates familiarity with. In fact, both the above examples discussing the library stamp and the use of the words 'shhhhh' and 'borrowed' are examples of activating the readers' content schema, showing an awareness of what entails using and getting books from a library.

Since the children meet the same book again and again over a period of a year, the first readings are precious, because these capture the unmediated and unfiltered responses of the children, when their delight and their shock at the narrative is innocent, natural and 'unknowing'. As will be evident in the rest of the chapter, and in the two following chapters, a large chunk of these responses fall in the 'referential' category, which stands for identification, description or interpretation of the elements of the narrative and visuals in the text. To avoid repetition, I will make note of categories other than the referential, unless there is a discussion of deeper inference by the participants.

5.4.3 Magical metafiction - 'It's a magic book!'

From the first Literature Circles it became clear to me that the children had not seen books like these before. The metafictive features of these books surprised them at every turn (literally). Schematically, this experience of reading the books engaged their content schemas of what a book is, at the same time it challenged and expanded their notion. Hence they call it 'a magic book', meaning the book confounds their expectations of a book. At the same time, there are several instances in the data, which feature as 'eureka' moments – these are special meaning-making moments where the children are seen to bridge the gap in the visual and verbal text and across the different levels of narrative. These eureka moments are instances where we can see the original schema readjusting to the new information and the new experience the readers gather. Breaking it down, the book surprises the readers, the readers show resistance to the 'new' notion of books and then they seem to expand their understanding by making sense of these metafictive features. The following are some examples of schema expanding, meaning-making moments.

5.4.3.1 Identifying metaleptic features:

Here is one of the earliest signs of the children of this project decoding visual images that are seemingly fragmented or incomplete (metaleptic):

> [Children start looking at the back cover]
>
> Soumi: What do you think is happening here? At the back cover?
>
> Saanvi: footprints
>
> Soumi: Who's footprints are these?
>
> Javed: Bunny's
>
> Saanvi: What's that? [Pointing to the rabbit's ear partially visible on the back cover]
>
> Soumi: That's a very good question Saanvi…
>
> Multiple children [all together]: Ears. The bunny's ears from the front page.
>
> (First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

It is noteworthy that Saanvi, at four years old, was the youngest amongst all those present. So it is fitting that she poses the question while the other children, who are older and hence likely to be developmentally at a more advanced level, answer her. This perhaps serves as a small example of comparison between the differences in their visual literacy skills. The

older children are seemingly more experienced, thus more accomplished than younger readers in their reading and comprehension.

5.4.3.2 A book within a book

Here is another instance of children 'getting' metafiction, that is, the children are successfully able to negotiate the multiple meanings across the different levels of narrative. As explained in the third chapter, Gravett often uses the nesting 'book-within-a-book' device or *myse en abyme*, a 'framing technique' of embedding a story-within-a-story to highlight the nature of the book as a physical artefact (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). In the following extract from one of the earlier Literature Circle gatherings, Zain aptly summarises the third spread by saying that the Rabbit is 'reading our book'. The book that the children are touching and holding is the same book that the Rabbit is reading. It even has the same visual images and written text.

> Zain: He …He's (rabbit) reading our book.
>
> Soumi [excited]: YES! Which book?
>
> Najab [Pointing to the book I am holding up]: This book.
>
> Soumi: This is interesting, isn't it! He's got the same book that we have got in our hands! How is that possible?! Let's find out!
>
> (First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

This example, as well as my obvious excitement, is evidence that some of the children have been successful at interpreting the multilevel narration and the *myse en abyme* feature used in the text.

5.4.3.3 Tactile delight

The children were thrilled with the two spreads (in the endpapers), which had tactile features. The first is the removable library card in a docket and the second is the envelop with the removable 'real' letter from the library in the last spread. The fact that the book had a separable part, which could be removed, felt, handled and read aloud and then finally returned to the docket and envelop respectively, lead to much astonishment and delight among the children. Here is the first instance when they see the library card:

> Javed: Another letter? [pointing to the library docket]
>
> Soumi: Do you know what this is? [library docket card]

Najab: Is that one a rabbit too? [pointing to the two rabbits sketched on the docket]

Soumi: Yes, those are two rabbits. You can pass it around. [takes the docket card and passes to students]

Soumi: This is the list of people who have borrowed the book.

[Najab reads aloud the digits on the borrowing slip on the verso]

(First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

On seeing the card the children were unsure if they were 'allowed' to take the removable part out of the little holder. Upon being asked to look at it freely, they examined it in pairs, often getting out of their positions/seats to reach for the little card, turning it over and over, and constantly commenting on how unusual it was for a book to come apart in different pieces. The video recording of the session shows them excited and vying with each other to get their turn at holding the card. In fact most of them said that they had never seen a book like this before! As mentioned earlier, this is evidence that a book like *Wolves* was jarring some of the readers' schemas about books. Reactions such as these were encouraging since through this project I had hoped to expand the young readers' awareness of different possibilities in books.

5.4.4 Out of the box – showing awareness of expressions

The sixth spread, with the wolves climbing out of a box, looking ferocious while the rabbit continues to reads in the foreground, is a scene/moment replete with multiple meaning making opportunities. This spread had multilevel narration, there is a pun on the expression 'a pack of wolves' and a stark contrast between the wild and scary expression of the wolves and the rabbit engrossed in reading, oblivious to the imminent dangers.

Right from the start, the children showed an inclination to talk about the feelings of the characters. Whether prompted by my questions or spontaneously identifying with the emotions of the narrative, the discussions would often revolve around what the characters were feeling. Usually I would follow their statements or claims with 'what makes you say that?' Or 'how do you think you know?' This would make the participants pause and reflect on their statements. While some of them might be puzzled and answer with an all-too-frequent shrug of the shoulder, or with a quiet 'I don't know', some others would take a minute to think about my questions and re-visit the page. Often, through reflecting loudly they would eventually answer my questions. This is one such instance that generated a lot of discussion and we see Najab replying to my question quite confidently.

Soumi: What's happening here?

Multiple voices: The wolves are going to eat rabbit.

Soumi: Are they going to eat him? O dear, how do you know that?

Najab: Because they are *looking* at the rabbit [original emphasis].

(First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

This was different to earlier instances because the children demonstrated their first attempt to copy the expressions of the wolves in a bid to explain their understanding. When Najab says the last sentence, 'Because they are looking at the rabbit' he makes a scary face with teeth bared in a snarl, just like the wolf in that double spread, copying the wolf's expression while at the same time pausing over the word so as to emphasise the 'manner of looking'. Going back to the visual/cognitive analysis rubric, this moment conflates a number of categorisations. It fits in the Referential category since we see the children interpreting the narrative. Simultaneously, this instance also falls under the 'Personal' category – they know from personal experience that the recipient of such a look is going to be in trouble. Furthermore, the Compositional category is also suitable here since these children, and especially Najab is seen interpreting emotional ekphrasis, and what that 'look' *means*, a way of engaging his metacognitive skills. Finally, this is a 'Performative' response too, as we see Najab trying to replicate the expression of the wolf to emphasise his meaning and his interpretation. We can see that the children are engaging their schema and *anticipating* what happens next in the narrative. This is an example of a complex meaning-making instance, which incorporates the rules of visual grammar. At the same time viewing it via schema theory and a cognitive lens provides an understanding of the processes the children went through to arrive at the conclusion in the quotes above.

5.4.5 Intertextuality

The participants, during their collaborative meaning making, would often refer to other popular books or videos that they were familiar with. One such instance was the children referring to *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson. Here the children are referring to how scary the wolves are.

? : Wolves are bigger and …

Javed: Wolves are scarier than foxes

[The rest of the children compared with other scary animals: elephants, *The Gruffalo*, etc.]

Based on the connections made to other texts, this response falls in the 'Intertextual' category. In other instances, the group talks about characters from other books like *Peter Rabbit* (Beatrix Potter 1901). One of the participants, Masood, who would usually be silent during most discussions, often referred to the wolf as the 'Were-Rabbit'. I corrected him on a couple of occasions, but he consistently referred to the scary wolf as the were-rabbit. I am not entirely certain which book/or character he was referring to, but a possible source could be *Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (2005), a popular stop-motion animated comedy film. However, it seemed only Masood was familiar with this film/character, because the rest of the group didn't use the term. Despite this, we all seemed to understand that he was referring to the wolf, and there was no confusion during meaning making. References to popular culture and media also can be categorised as 'Intertextual' responses as per the adapted analysis rubric. The belief that 'wolves are scarier than foxes' is again a schematic reference where the speaker, Javed, gives a clue about his scary animal schema (content schema, according to the categorisation) and we see that that children are able to relate it to other scary animals like elephants and a 'gruffalo'. With this awareness of the schemas they are activating, we can understand how the participants are making these deeper, inferential text-to-text and life-to-text connections.

5.4.6 Cultural connotations: of 'fleas and ticks', dogs (and pigs)

In some rare moments the participants brought in deeper connections to their interpretation of the text. Whilst I categorised these as Personal (inferential), these were derived from the cultural milieu the children came from. As mentioned elsewhere, the participants are second-generation immigrants of Pakistani origin and from households that follow the Islamic faith. Indeed, most of them, at different points during the fieldwork reported that they were taking classes in Islamic religious education in local 'Madarsas' on Sundays. This is where they learn the ways of the Islamic faith, the scriptures and reading and writing in Urdu, their mother tongue. At particular moments in the Literature Circle discussions, their religious beliefs mediated their understanding of the books.

In the following example, the children are looking at the 11th and 12th opening, which shows the rabbit walking up through the dense fur of the wolf's tail and back, still engrossed in reading his book.

Child?: '**Bushy tails**'

Soumi: Who's got a bushy tail?

Multiple voices: Dogs & wolves

Najab [reading]: 'Dense fur that harbours fleas and ticks'

Soumi: What are fleas and ticks?

Najab: It is something when you are not well [I think he means the 'flu']

Soumi [Pointing to the picture of fleas jumping out of the wolf fur]: Do you know what are these?

Najab: They are fleas? Yes! They are fleas.

Soumi: Does anyone have a pet dog at home? Any other pet at home?

[Was that a collective *eeeuughh*? Revulsion at the mention of dogs?]

Najab: Oh yes, dogs have fleas in the hair

[Is this a cultural issue? Don't Muslim families have pets? Must look up]

Javed: My big brother's cat got lost and they got a new cat.

Soumi: Sometimes pets get fleas in their fur.

(First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

This moment has a number of rich seams of meaning making running through it simultaneously. Najab is trying to negotiate the meaning of the new word 'fleas' which he initially confuses for the word 'flu'. When shown the picture of the fleas springing off the wolf's fur, he is able to make the connection with the small insects/parasites that live in animal fur. To help the rest of the group understand, I ask if anyone has a pet dog at home. To my surprise, the reaction to this question was one of instant disgust with most of them making the 'euugh' sound. At this point I was unsure of why they might react in that manner to the mention of dogs or indeed pets. Najab continues with the original train of discussion when he is able to link fleas with dogs. Simultaneous to the group conversation, I was trying to internally explain the group's reaction to my question. I instantly changed my train of discussion, extremely conscious of possibly offending any participant or their families.

Later I sought clarification from my colleagues who are practicing Muslims and found references to the *Hadeeth*, the reported oral sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, which is believed to be open to interpretation. According to these sources, there is a story where the angel Gabriel says to the Prophet that angels do not bless or enter a household that has pet

dogs or photographs. In another interpretation, the ground walked upon by a dog is seen as unclean, so many Muslim households would not consider allowing a dog indoors because it would 'contaminate' potential space for prayer. Cats are not viewed in a similar light. Some practicing Muslims do not keep dogs as pets inside the house (while they might keep birds or cats), others depend on dogs, for instance as guide dogs. This is a contentious issue and often debated through media reports. With this information I was able to reflect on that particular moment of an intercultural response, a moment when I was unaware of the participants' cultural rules. From a schema reading perspective, this cultural schema highlights the participants' traditional and religious values and their implicit beliefs that go against the 'knowledge presupposed by the text' (Carrell & Eisterhold 1983). Here is an instance of cultural asymmetry caused by the reader's inference of the text. This 'moment of intensity' gains momentum from the presence of a group of readers who are from the same cultural background. Perhaps that is why I was able to notice this nearly missed response. Had it been one person's quiet response I am sure I would not have realised the cultural dissonance caused by the reference to pets. This underscores the nature of the interpretive community formed by spaces like a Literature Circle, where meaning can be probed and revised based on the contributions of different participants (Short & Burke 1996, Sipe 1998).

This moment echoed an earlier instance when I was discussing my book selection with the four class teachers. I showed them the proposed selection, which included a picturebook called *Wolf Won't Bite*, also by Gravett, in my list. This is a story about three pigs that bully a captive wolf into performing tricks like a circus animal while they literally run rings around him. The wolf is initially scared and compliant, but in the end, frustrated and rebellious, his wild nature surfaces and he chases the three pigs in anger, trying to bite them. This book would have been a good foil to the other book, *Wolves*, which shows a different aspect to this animal's nature. In addition, it also contains a number of emotional expressions and moments, making it relevant to my study. However, the teachers suggested that I ought to remove the book from my selected set since it prominently features pigs. According to the teachers, Islam considers pigs unclean, and prohibits the consumption of pig meat in any form. It could cause offence to some parents who might take exception to their children discussing a book about pigs. Not wishing to offend anyone, I took the teachers' advice and removed the book from my selection, and this incident stayed with me as a reminder of the school's culturally sensitive ethos. It was also a constant reminder of the need to be culturally responsive with the children as well be ethically mindful of the treatment of potentially sensitive and controversial themes.

5.4.8 The 'wolf tree' and walking up the wolf's tail

The tree, which is shaped like a wolf, and looms over the reading rabbit in an ominous manner drew a number of comments from the participants. At first glance however, the children were not able to identify the shape of the tree. The following excerpt is from the second phase, second Literature Circle discussion:

> Saleem: The tree looks like a wolf.
>
> Soumi: Yes, the tree looks like a wolf! Yes, Najab?
>
> Najab: The thingy went to hide there and then they can come out and eat it.
>
> Soumi: Zain, what were you saying?
>
> Zain: That's a wolf tree.
>
> (Second LC, P1, four participants, Phase II)

Saleem is the first one who comments about the shape of the tree, and once I validate his response, the others seem to agree with him and Zain calls it the 'wolf-tree'. From this moment on, in the second phase of the fieldwork, this spread came to be known as the 'wolf-tree page' during our discussions. Najab tries to explain the movements of the wolves and says that the 'thingy' (meaning the wolf) is hiding in the trees and might come out and eat the rabbit at an opportune moment. Najab is, once more, predicting the next turn of events in the book. Based on his schema about animals of prey, hunting, and also of the use of the surprise factor, he anticipates the wolf's attack on the rabbit. This is interpretation of the narrative at an inferential level.

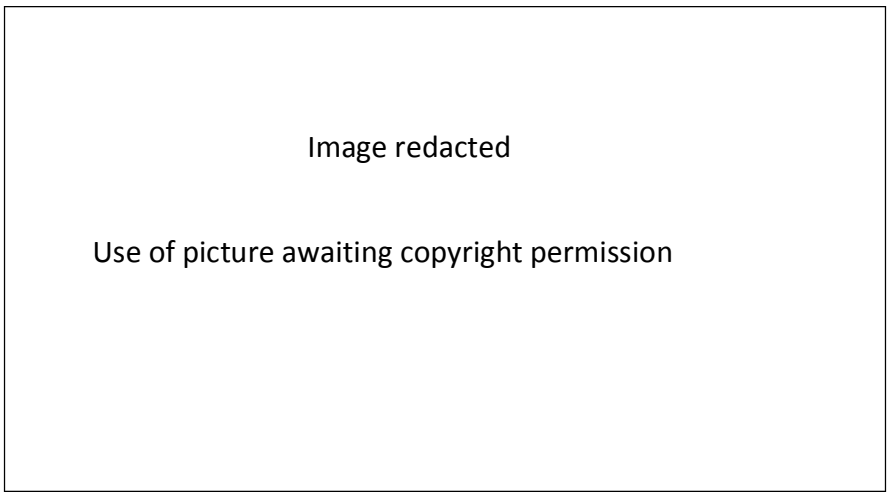

Figure 5. 2 *Wolves* - The 'wolftree' spread (unpaginated)

Najab further explains the next page where the rabbit is climbing along the nose of the wolf.

> Najab: Rabbit is walking on his nose, so when he finds out he needs to run away. But he never run away because this is the story. But he might fall from the nose, and the wolf is going to get him.
>
> (Second LC, P1, four participants, Phase II)

In this excerpt he is thinking aloud, almost willing the rabbit to run away. Yet he is also aware that 'this is the story'. And that what happens in the story is unlikely to change even though he wanted the rabbit to escape. Here is another instance when Najab shows awareness of the conventions of story telling, an instance of the 'formal' schema where background knowledge of the rhetorical organisational structures informs a reader's knowledge of the genre. Najab shows his own knowledge that once the author has written the words and made the narratorial decision, other options are not possible, as much as the readers might want to turn things differently. As in previous excerpts from the discussions, here too Najab is aware of the impending possible danger. He says, 'the wolf is going to get him.' From these instances, one can see that Najab is acclimatising to the fact that the rabbit might meet an unpleasant end in the next few pages, while the others might think and hope differently.

5.4.9 Face off - The dangerous diet of wolves

This double spread, where the rabbit at last realises the danger he is in, and looks directly at the reader with his terror quite evident, primes the reader with the premonition of impending danger.

Image redacted

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Figure 5. 3 Frightened rabbit from *Wolves* (unpaginated)

The following is the responses of two of the participants. First is Javed who looks at the picture from the wolf's perspective:

> Javed: He is climbing on his nose. He is angry now. [First mention of emotion without any prompting.]
>
> Soumi: Who is angry?
>
> Javed: The wolf.
>
> (First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

Javed (Phase I) brings up the emotions he interprets from the moment in the narrative and he seems most affected by the eyes of the wolf and the frown with which the wolf regards his quarry. Najab, on the other hand, seems to be most affected by the startled and scared eyes of the rabbit who is caught in the stare of the wolf (Phase II). When being asked about the rabbit's feelings this is what he has to say:

> Soumi: What do you think the rabbit is feeling here?
>
> Najab: He's scared… because he thinks one of the wolves is going to eat him.
>
> Soumi: He's thinking that? Is he…? May be he is…What does the wolves look like? Does he look happy or …what do they look [like]?
>
> Multiple responses: They look angry
>
> ?: He looks happy…
>
> Soumi: Do they look happy?
>
> Javed: No, angry!
>
> Soumi: Yeah, I think you might be right, Javed…!
>
> (Second LC, P1, four participants, Phase II)

It is interesting to note that these excerpts belong to two separate Literature Circle discussions, from the first and second phases respectively, and in both the discussions, Javed seems struck by the emotion of anger expressed by the wolf. In both the responses, Javed seems to identify with the character of the wolf more strongly. By the second phase, he seems to gain more confidence in his voice. In the second example Javed is insistent that it is an angry wolf, despite another child in the group suggesting that the wolf is happy. These are both examples of Compositional responses, which show identification of the visual grammar and emotion ekphrasis of the wolf and the rabbit. By the second phase, the children were tuned to talked about the emotions of the characters and the narrative. Here,

my mediation prompts the children to respond, however, even without my mediation the children seem to have firm opinions about the emotions demonstrated by the characters.

5.4.10 Rabbit meets a violent end. Or does he?

This moment, when the double spread shows a ripped up book, and no sign of the rabbit, suggests a number of possibilities for the fate of the rabbit, most of which are sinister. Here is an instance of the children reacting and responding to this moment:

> Soumi: Masood, what do you think has happened here?
>
> Masood: Cut.
>
> Soumi: Ah, cut? Who cut the book?
>
> Masood: The were-rabbit? Okay?
>
> Zinia: The wolf?
>
> Soumi: The wolf cut the rabbit's book?
>
> Najab: He cut the book.
>
> Soumi: Yeah, that was not a nice a thing to do.
>
> Najab: It is not nice. And he needs all the pieces to return.
>
> Soumi: Okay, and he needs all the pieces to return to the library. Yes, that's right. Okay, so I can see the book, but I can't see the rabbit here.
>
> Najab: Because he dropped the book, and the wolf clawed the book open and the rabbit gone.

(Second LC, five participants, Phase I)

In his excerpt, we can see the children making links with the previous moments in the narrative. They seem struck by the fact that the book is cut and torn. Najab thinks it is not a nice thing to do and he is quite concerned that 'he needs all the pieces to return' – meaning the rabbit needs to return the whole book to the library, but with the book torn, the rabbit will get into trouble. Most of the children appear quite certain about who the perpetrator of the 'cut' is: while Masood says it is the 'Were-Rabbit', both Zinia and Najab think it is the wolf. Zinia does seem a bit puzzled by the mention of the 'Were-Rabbit', but as I have explained earlier, Masood often referred to the 'wolf' as the were-rabbit. When I comment upon the absence of the rabbit, the children are not forthcoming with reasons. Indeed, I had expected them to show some form of worry or concern for the well being of the rabbit. Instead they all focused on the way the book has been treated and appear to be shocked at

the fate of the book. Najab's explanation in a way makes sense of the absence of alarm in the children's reaction. According to Najab, the rabbit drops the book in his bid to escape the wolf, and the wolf 'clawed the book open' and the rabbit escaped. This particular explanation seems to make the complete meaning from the narrative so far. At the same time, the notion of the rabbit being eaten up by the wolf has also seemingly not occurred to the children.

From this excerpt, I can infer that the children were either not ready or unable to contemplate a disastrous or fatal treatment of the rabbit with whom they had started identifying. From Najab's explanation it becomes clear that they simply choose to believe that the rabbit has escaped the bounds of the book before the wolf ripped it open. A disastrous result for the book does not mean a disastrous end for the rabbit himself. There are instances of the children talking about pet rabbits; there are also instances where we can see the children's love of books, reading, and of libraries and identification with the rabbit as an avid reader. The phenomenon of 'immersive identification' that Nikolajeva (2014b) describes when the reader uncritically assumes the fictional character's hopes, fears, feelings and yearnings as their own (explained earlier in Chapter 2) can be seen unfolding here, with the children identifying closely with the rabbit and being so protective towards him that the cannot contemplate an ending to the book where the rabbit comes to harm.

5.4.11 The alternative ending: A critical literacy moment

The alternative ending in the book depicting the rabbit and the wolf sitting and sharing a jam sandwich challenges a number of readerly expectations.

Image redacted

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Figure 5. 4 *Wolves* – The alternative ending (unpaginated)

I have analysed this spread in an earlier chapter (Chapter 3) and predicted interesting responses from the children. Upon coming across this spread, the children were divided in their willingness to believe versus their suspicion of the second ending provided by the author. In the rear end pages, there is a large number of letters and pamphlets lying on the door mat, all addressed to 'G Rabbit' and most of them are reminders from the library to return the book *Wolves*. The following is an excerpt from the third phase where the children are trying to reconcile themselves to the unexpected ending by proving rational explantions.

> Soumi: What do we have here?
>
> Ahmed: Poster, a letter.
>
> Soumi: A letter. Right, and who are these letters for?
>
> Zain: To the rabbit. The G rabbit.
>
> Soumi: They are all for the G Rabbit?
>
> Najab: Because, he needs to return the book.
>
> Soumi: Hmm, okay. So, why do you think he has not returned the book?
>
> Najab: Because he dropped and he ate the sandwich and he forgot the book. Then he went he went to play with the wolf because they are friends.
>
> Najab: But I don't think it really happened. Because there are no vegetarian wolves and wolves are not best friends with rabbits.
>
> Soumi: So you think… erm… what do you think happened? Is the book telling us the truth or what do you think happened?
>
> Najab: They are making up.
>
> Soumi: The book is making it up? Okay. What do others think about it? The book is making it up?
>
> Naima: Fiction. This is fiction. Some are nonfiction.
>
> (Second LC, P3, four participants, Phase III)

In this excerpt from Phase III, one of the longest exchanges with a single participant, Najab tries to explain what he thinks might have happened to the book. According to him 'he dropped' the book (referring to the earlier opening where the book is ripped), then he shares the sandwich with the wolf and goes to play with the wolf as they are friends and forgets all about the book. This seems to be a simple explanation that readily believes the order of narration depicted in the book. But at the very next instant Najab, without being

prompted, gives us an entirely different version of his understanding. He uses his critical thinking voice and says, 'I don't think it really happened'. This is an example of where Najab is seen to question the authority of the author using his knowledge of the nature of wolves. He knows that 'there are no vegetarian wolves' and if one follows that logic, the version portrayed by the author cannot be true. He states a truism that 'wolves are not best friends with rabbits' thus questioning the authors premise that 'no rabbits were harmed'. Taking a pragmatic view of the dynamics between the wolf and the rabbit, Najab is seen to critically assess the facts presented in the picturebook and concludes that the author is wrong, or the author is deliberately lying or misleading.

This is the moment in the book that is crucial to developing critical literacy skills. As I have analysed earlier in Chapter Three, there are several postmodern devices and Radical Change features (Dresang 1999) at work in this juncture including frame-breaking, collage-like fragmented illustrative styles, multilevel narration and different narratorial voices. At the same time the reader is being invited to question the authorial voice. This leads to a moment of tension in the narrative where the readers are presented with a choice: either they continue believing the authority of the written word, or take the critical stance and question the narrative. Najab here is seen to take the critical questioning stance. In a previous instance, Najab was heard musing, 'The wolf is inside our book, but I don't know who's inside their book.' This was yet another critical thinking moment where Najab resist taking the narrative on its face value and probes deeper, and cuts through the features of *myse en abyme* and multilevel narration.

Another participant, Naima, reacts in a different manner. She responds to the text, as well as to Najab's interpretation by saying, 'Fiction. This is fiction. Some are nonfiction.' It is worth noting that Naima was not very vocal in the first two phases. So there is an evident increase in confidence in her ability to voice her opinions. She is also seen using her 'Formal' schema (Carrell & Eisterhold 1983) where she is sharing her understanding of genres of texts – fiction and non-fiction. She reassures herself by saying that this is a fictional outcome and the rabbit is not really hurt. While she is disturbed by the ripped up pictures of the rabbit and the wolf, she not seen to question the author's words of the 'alternate ending' and continues to believe that the rabbit and wolf are friends. This she demonstrates through a picture that shows the rabbit and wolf sharing a large burger.

Figure 5. 5 Naima's response to *Wolves*

The picture above, with both rabbit and wolf sharing a burger is a scene of camaraderie and equality. The rabbit owing to his small size has been given a high chair to be as high as the wolf and able to reach the food. The wolf has a very civilised napkin around his neck, and they are both seated at a table, facing each other. The picture is whole with no signs of violence or cuts and tears on the body of the animals, which is how Naima envisions the story ending. These two examples from two participants show the range of responses that the book evoked from the different participants. This picture in its wholeness and displaying a noticeable absence of any signs of violence is in keeping with the analysis in the previous section. Naima, along with most other participants, is not inclined to believe that any harm has come to the rabbit and this picture is her way of making permanent the happy ending that the author describes. Naima's response also demonstrates that some readers are unwilling to question the authority of the written word, despite there being evidence to the contrary in the form of visual clues.

5.4.12 Multilingual responses

As I have elaborated earlier, one of the aims of this study was to encourage the participants to respond in their first languages/mother tongues. In the previous chapter on methodology, I have mentioned the challenge I faced in getting them to respond in Urdu or Punjabi. In the following excerpts, we can see two participants, Zinia and Naima sharing their concerns that they do not speak English very well. The context for these excerpts is the first reading of *Wolves*. After a few conversation-turns about the first few pages of the book, I casually posed a question in Urdu. The children were surprised and amused. They stopped their discussions and responded by asking me if I really spoke Urdu. I replied yes,

and further asked them about the languages they spoke at home. Children responded by saying that they speak Urdu and/or Punjabi at home.

> Soumi [Speaking first in Hindi and then in English]: *Thodi thodi Urdu aati hai*, I speak some Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi.
>
> [I then welcome them to speak in any of these languages they are comfortable in.]
>
> (First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

While some were more forthcoming than others when talking about their home languages, a couple of the children said that they try to speak in English all the time at home so that their English proficiency increases.

Zinia was the one who was most concerned about her English proficiency. (She received regular EAL support at school.) She is seen to demonstrate a metacognitive awareness of her oral English shortcomings in the following brief exchange:

> Zinia: I can't speak in English.
>
> Soumi: But you *are* speaking in English. And you speak very well!
>
> (First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

Perhaps the deficit label attributed to EAL students was so ingrained in Zinia that she failed to find confidence in the fact that she *was* indeed speaking in English as well as regularly communicating within the whole group. During the course of the first phase of fieldwork, Zinia's confidence in making contributions during discussions improved; though often she would forget to complete art tasks that were assigned for home. After the first phase ended, Zinia had to travel back to Pakistan with her family for nearly six months. She was hence absent from the second phase of fieldwork and by the time she returned, she had a lot of catching up on studies to do and her class teacher deemed it best to keep her away from the book meetings. It was, therefore, unfortunate that she was unable to participate beyond the first phase of fieldwork. Due to this I am unable to report an arc of progression in her thinking about the picturebook narratives or her responses. However, she brought a range and variety in the study through her participation and her responses for which I am thankful.

In another instance, Naima shows similar doubt about her English proficiency, which I try to quell and encourage.

Naima [in Urdu]: *Mujhe thodi thodi English aati hai…* ['I speak a little bit of English.' The rest is unclear, but she is not happy with her fluency in English.]

Soumi [Assures her that her English isn't bad at all]: You speak very well! I like it.

(First LC, all nine participants, Phase I)

Naima was different from Zinia in that she enjoyed participating in our discussions and her favourite mode of responding was through visuals and drawings. She was highly interested in all tasks involving craftwork, drawing and colouring-in and some of the most interesting visual responses later on in the project are Naima's creations.

5.5 Visual and Performative responses

The participants showed evidence of recognising facial expressions and were able to use their observations when they were asked to draw the characters from the books. They noticed expressions like angry eyes, and scary sharp teeth, which they drew on masks of rabbits and wolves as a part of an extension activity at the end of Phase I and then again in Phase II.

Figure 5. 6 Rabbit masks

Figure 5. 7 Wolf Masks

The above images show the children using different techniques to express different moods and emotions of the characters. Note the downturned mouth and small eyes denoting a 'sad' rabbit in contrast to the 'happy' and smiling rabbit with large eyes denoting 'wonder' and 'surprise'. Both the wolf images here denote scary faces with sharp teeth and prominent mouth. The vividly coloured mask was meant to be a 'really angry' wolf according to Mohammed, P2.

The following Wordle representation of a transcript from Phase II shows the children's preoccupation with the shape of the mouth, teeth as well as some colours and emotions possibly linked to the colours and facial expressions.

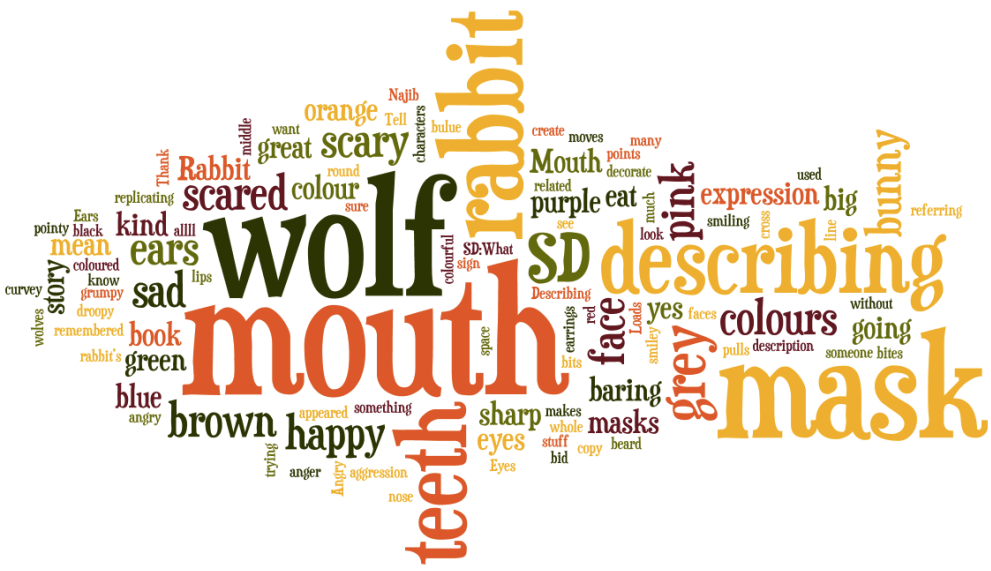

Figure 5. 8 Wordle image of a transcript discussing *Wolves*.

I go into more detailed analysis of colours and emotions in the following chapter, which analyses the children's responses around the second book *Again!* and presents the findings.

5.6 A summary of findings and some reflections

In the preceding sections I have presented the analysis of the data gathered around the first book, *Wolves*. While many of the selections are from the earliest Literature Circle sessions, I have tried to include some excerpts from later phases to show how the children engaged differently over the months.

- Children engaged with the tactile nature of the books. Their quiet thrill and excitement was gratifying since one of the sub aims of this study was to bring greater awareness of the different kinds of picturebooks available. Also I wished to increase reader awareness of the many creative possibilities afforded by books such as these. The tactile elements of this book, as well as those in the other selected books, were a revelation to the participants as well as their class teachers and helped meet the project aim. In the analysis, I have incorporated elements of Schema Theory which sheds light on the thinking processes of the participants, their existing knowledge structures around the content and forms as well as their expanding schemas about concepts like 'books' themselves. As explained earlier, the metafictive features of this book successfully altered the schema of a picturebook in the minds of these young readers. While in the first phase they were surprised and shocked by some of the features and narratorial devices, by the third

phase they were able to take the surprise elements in their stride and respond more critically to the multimodality and the visual and verbal synergy of the text. This gradual expansion of schema is seen to happen even within one phase of the intervention. In the following chapter I discuss how the children used their learnings about picturebook features from *Wolves* in their understanding of the second book *Again!*.

- They could recognise most primary emotions like happiness, fear, anger and some secondary emotions like surprise, grumpy, crazy and moody. Their vocabulary seemed to increase along with their literacy skills of reading and writing as the fieldwork progressed over the three phases.

- The participants demonstrated the use of a range of vocabulary to describe the emotions.

- They were able to replicate to an extent in drawings – fierce wolf teeth, red eyes, open mouth (to signify shouting/fear)

- Children displayed their ability to negotiate the various metafictive features and demonstrated a critical stance while questioning the narratorial decisions made by the author.

I discuss these findings in greater detail in my Discussion chapter later. However, after having presented these findings, I went back to my field notes and journal written during each phase of the project. I gathered a few reflections that questioned the roles that one performs as a researcher. One of the persistent themes on which I had multiple entries was - Where does one stop being the researcher who is investigating reader response and start being a teacher or a 'show-er' of literary phenomenon? There were several instances where as a researcher I held back from explaining phenomena like intertextuality (for example, linking the image of the wolf wearing a scarf to *Little Red Riding Hood's* wolf in the grandma's garb) to the participants with the intention of keeping their responses spontaneous, natural and unaffected. However, this study also aims to impact the participants' emotional engagement by using the picturebooks as 'simulation grounds'. To a certain extent the fieldwork acted as an intervention to train the participants to look for clues that help them understand the Theory of Mind of the characters – so, a degree of mediated showing, telling and teaching was warranted. As the fieldwork progressed I became more comfortable negotiating and switching between the roles of the researcher

and the educator. I also gained confidence in both my roles when I noticed the children using the newly learnt skills of observation when they were engaging with a challenging new book-spread. This phenomenon gains ground along the course of each of these chapters where we see the children growing in confidence over the three phases, while interacting with each of these visually and verbally complex texts.

Chapter 6 Analysis of *Again!*

In the first phase of the fieldwork, after the participants' enthusiastic responses to *Wolves*, I introduced the next title *Again!* on the fourth day of our Literature Circle meetings. So far, the children had produced artwork and creative visual responses to *Wolves*, the first book. At this point, my aim was to let the children explore the picturebooks more independently so I decreased the support I was giving them. I simply read them the title of the new picturebook and let the children handle the book by themselves. By this stage in the first phase, I was gathering the P1 and P2 students in separate groups and I noticed that some of their initial reactions were markedly different. After the sessions, I had made detailed observation notes and as well as journal entries and based on those reflections, I will discuss these differences in the first section of this chapter. The rest of the chapter details the responses of the children based around 'moments of intensity'. Much of the responses around the metafictive features in the book come from the first and second readings of the title *Again!*. In later sections of the chapter, I analyse the visual responses the participants produced in the second and third phases of the project. These are linked to the children's understanding of 'emotion ekphrasis' and interpretation of the character's feelings in the narrative.

6.1 Differences in reactions between P1 and P2: From my journal notes

While both the groups were thrilled with the tactile features in the pages, the P1 students relied more on the visuals than on the written text to make meaning. The P2 students, on the other hand, were interested equally in the words and visuals and therefore were more able to enjoy the visual and verbal puns.

6.1.1 Reaction of the P1 group

I read out the title and handed the book to the children in the Literature Circle. I noticed that the group were waiting for me to read out more from the book. When I did not offer to read the text for them, they started turning the pages themselves and remarking on some of the prominent visuals. For example, they said 'Dragon is a baby' or 'I have seen dragons before in a zoo.' Despite not being very fluent in reading the text, they leafed through the pages swiftly. The first big moment for them was when they came across the holes in the pages: they stopped short in surprise and shock. However, they were quick to comprehend

that the dragon had made the holes – that he had breathed fire and burnt the book. The performative and tactile reaction of the entire group was one of the highlights of this session. All of them touched and felt the edges of the burnt-out hole and they took turns to peep through the holes, much to their delight and excitement. These responses may be categorised as performative responses based on my analysis rubric with the children visibly enacting their surprise and shock caused by the narrative. At the same time their performative and overt expressions are a way of interpreting the narrative, hence these responses also fall under the referential category in general, with particular alignment with the performative category.

After the initial cover-to-cover familiarisation with the book, I held the book up and started the walkthrough. Unlike the previous walkthrough, I deliberately reduced my input while the children looked at the pages. My role was more of a facilitator, managing the group interaction and at times asking probing questions to help the discussion along. When I revisited the book on the next day with the children (day 5), I let them take turns leading the discussion. I encouraged each student to try and describe one spread, and share his or her first reactions. However, I noticed that they would usually stop after a couple of brief comments, and I would have to supply scaffolding questions to elicit further thoughts. While I had hoped they would be more independent, they clearly needed my support to negotiate the pages. I had prepared for this eventuality and developed a set of questions to guide the reading, which I used, as needed, to help their exploration of the book:

- What do you think the little dragon is doing? Where is he?
- How do you think he is feeling? (Asked at various points of the narrative)
- Why does he want to read the book?
- Who is the bigger dragon?
- Tell us more about the storybook and its characters.
- Why does the story keep changing? How is the storybook story different from other fairy tales/ dragon tales that you know?
- What do you think the two dragons are doing?
- How do you think we should treat library books?
- Why is the book all scratched and ripped up?
- What do you think happened to the characters in the storybook?
- Does it [pointing to a picture/scene] remind you of anything? What?

6.1.2 Reaction of the P2 group

In a contrast to the P1 students, the P2s were eager to read the title and the name of the author by themselves. They were quick to leaf through the initial pages, but they stopped at the point where Cedric, the little dragon is being read a storybook and started reading that 'book-within-a-book.' Since this was a time for them to familiarise themselves with the book, I urged them to look at the whole book rather than focus on a single spread. They came to the hole in the pages and, like the P1 children, were taken aback. They were shocked and dismayed that someone had made holes in the library book, which meant that it would be impossible to return it to the library. However, there was no evidence in the written or verbal text that this was a book borrowed from the library. It seemed that this group of children were transposing their memory of reading *Wolves*, and assumed that *Again!* was a library book too.

On the whole, with the P2 students, there was much laughter and excitement. They understood that there were two title pages, and early on in the walkthrough, it became a game for Najab to note the number of times the word 'again' occurs in the book. Each time I read out 'again' all the children would repeat after me, and soon the chorus took on a performative and pantomime tone. These responses, like those of the P1 students, can be categorised as performative. At the same time, like the younger participants, they were using these outwardly expressions to interpret aspects of the narrative, plot, setting and characters (Arizpe et al. 2014, p 126) all of which can be assimilated under the referential category. There were a number of overlaps between these categories of responses as well as the level of response – meaning, it was sometimes hard to distinguish whether the response was an inferential one or a literal one.

6.2 Responding to metafiction

This section discusses the children's ability to interpret the different metafictive features like unusual endpapers, multiple planes of narration, intertextuality and metalepsis. As before I have clustered their responses around the moments of intensity – the junctures in the text that elicit a big emotional reaction from the participants. Like with the first book, I have organised the moments in a largely chronological manner following the scenes in the text. However, there is some back and forth movement depending on the themes being discussed.

6.2.1 Endpapers - The second cover page

The P1 children had to be nudged into noticing the book-within-the-book phenomenon.

Soumi: What's happening in here?

Masood: Look a big dragon.

Soumi: A big dragon, yes. What is this?

Masood & Saleem: A cover?

Soumi: A cover, a second cover?

Masood & Saleem: Yeah

Soumi: Have you seen this book somewhere before?

Saleem: No

Soumi: No? What about the book he is carrying?

Masood & Saleem: No.

Saleem: Yeah, yeah, that's the same.

Soumi: It's the same book?

Saleem: Yeah

(First LC, P1, four participants, Phase I)

In the above excerpt, the two P1 participants who appear to be giving all the responses, did not at first seem to notice that the second cover page of the book is the same as the book held by the young dragon. After a few conversation turns, when I asked them to look again, they noticed this metafictive feature.

The P2 children, in contrast, quickly noticed that the endpapers were the same as the book that the baby dragon was reading on the cover page. They said immediately – 'He is reading our book!' Here is what another (unidentified) child says:

?: He is reading our book like the rabbit.

Soumi: Yes, you are right.

Javed: *Everybody* is reading our books! [My emphasis, to reflect Javed's tone.]

(First LC, P2, five participants, Phase I)

Clearly the unidentified child makes a link with the previous book, *Wolves*, where the character of the rabbit is reading the same book as the reader. This was the first evident instance of the children realising that the borders of the book were liable to merge, their first awareness of the phenomenon of intertextuality. Notably, the children did not express surprise or comment when they saw that the double spread of the bedtime book was the same as what we were reading. One of them simply noted, 'We are reading what the baby dragon's dad is reading out to him…'. This is evidence that the children were already learning from and assimilating their earlier experience of reading *Wolves*. They successfully remembered the metafictive features in the previous book, and when they came across similar features in the second book, they were less surprised and more aware and accepting of the disruption caused to the narrative by these features. This leads me to the assertion that the children's awareness of what books can do or their knowledge of different types of books in existence had changed or expanded since the time they first started the project. From the perspective of Schema Theory, the 'formal' schema of books the children held in their minds had undergone changes. Their concept of what constitutes a book was altering to accommodate the new features and characteristics of what Najab referred to as a 'magic' book (quoted in the earlier chapter). This can be linked to Cognitive Flexibility Theory (Jones & Spiro 1994), which says that notions of existing cognitive schemas are 'fluid' and that each new piece of information modifies the 'receptive cognitive structure'. After the time spent reading and discussing *Wolves*, the children appeared more equipped, and seemed to be able to more comfortably take in their stride the blurring of boundaries between the book and the book-within-a-book.

6.2.2 The planes of narration

The P2 children could also distinguish between the first plane and second plane of narratives. They were able to interpret that the baby dragon and the dad are on one plane while the book dragon, the princess and the trolls are on another. Despite their close juxtaposition, the children seem to understand that these planes are distinct from one another. Perhaps, this too they remembered and learnt from their experience of reading the first book, since *Wolves* also uses multiple planes of narration. There is some ambiguity in the gender of the older dragon, which led to some debate that I discuss later in the chapter. For now, I refer to the character as 'Dad', which is how the participants referred to the larger dragon initially.

They remarked on the upside down book, which leads to havoc in the book world – castles smashed, princesses turned upside down hanging on for dear life and dragons bumping

their heads, as well as the words in sentences all broken, crumbled and littered in one corner. This spread (13th) underscores the nature of the storybook as a changeable artefact. The book-within-a-book almost appears like a box or container, which, if shaken, can change the positions of its contents. When the children saw it, they recognised the two planes of the story narration. They also recognised that the actions on one level can impact the events on the second level.

6.2.3 Referential and/or intertextual responses – text-to-text/ life-to-text

The children used their previous knowledge of fantasy tales and fantastic beings to give meaning to the presence of the dragon. They also predicted the behaviour of the dragon, without any additional prompting. The book pre-supposes knowledge of these fairy tale characters. It appears that the children rise to the challenge and demonstrate a schematic awareness of dragons, as well as their characteristic behaviour (gained from previous exposure to these tales and texts). Even the quietest of the children, Masood, successfully engages the 'content' schema around dragons and has the following discussion with me:

> Soumi: Masood, what's happening here? What is this?
>
> Masood: A dragon, *woh book pad raha hai*. [He is reading book.]
>
> Soumi: *Book pad raha hai*? A dragon? [Reading a book? A dragon?]
>
> Masood: Is that a big dragon?
>
> Soumi: I don't know.
>
> Saleem: He is so big, he can breathe fire.
>
> Soumi: Ahh, can dragons breathe fire?
>
> Saleem: Yeah
>
> (First LC, P1, four participants, Phase I)

Here Masood describes what he sees, but at the same time, Saleem is predicting what is likely to happen next. It is evident that there is immediate acceptance of the context as well as the characters from both Masood and Saleem. The children were making predictions about '*what might happen in the narrative*' (Sipe 2008, p 138, original emphasis). They were using their existing knowledge and drawing connections from similar schemas they had encountered previously. They knew from other contexts that dragons breathe fire and therefore predicted that in the current book dragon might breathe fire as well.

The other notable aspect of this exchange is that the children unquestioningly took it in their stride that a dragon who is reading a book. In an example of a 'suspension of disbelief', they did not seem to question the characters or the setting of the book world but accepted them as credible and believable. This may be the result of their encountering with the previous title, *Wolves*, where a rabbit is seen reading a book. It is likely that that experience has modified their existing schema of the range of things an animal can do. The section on 'Reversing traditional schemas' later on in this chapter has further examples and explanation of the notion of changing and modifying existing schemas.

6.2.4 Metalepsis – where's the rest of daddy?

In the following extract, one of the participants was looking at the eighth spread, where Cedric is seen pulling a dragon-tail much larger than himself. The reader cannot see the larger dragon but can guess that the tail that Cedric is pulling belongs to the parent dragon who was reading the storybook to Cedric in an earlier page.

> Soumi: Where is the daddy on this page?
>
> Malina: Here [pointing to the tail]
>
> Soumi: Where is the rest of him?
>
> Malina: Over there [Gesturing to a space outside the page].
>
> S: Yes! You are right… We have to imagine him.
>
> (Second LC, P2, five participants, Phase I)

During this first reading of this book, the children seemed to understand this metaleptic feature, recognising the whole from a fragment and thus performed the cognitive completion of the image, as transpires in the above excerpt.

> Soumi: Right, now it is Zain's turn. Zain tell us a bit about what's happening here.
>
> Zain: The dragon is pulling the tail of the big dragon.
>
> Soumi: *Haan*? Why? [Yes? Why?]
>
> Zain: Because he wants to read the book again.
>
> Soumi: And what is he doing? Is he laughing or shouting
>
> Zain: Shouting
>
> Soumi: *Haan*? [Does he?]

Zain: *Usne moo khola. Usne papa ke dum ko pakda hai.* [He has opened his mouth. He is holding Dad's tail.]

Soumi: Is that a nice thing to do or not a nice thing to do.

Zain: You don't have to pull his tail.

(Third LC, P1, four participants, Phase II)

In this second example, we see Zain interpreting the same page in a different reading session. He goes further by answering the questions about the page, in Urdu, demonstrating his understanding of the body language of the characters, especially Cedric who is shouting and pulling his dad's tail. When asked if it a 'nice' thing to do, he does not pass a value judgement, but his words suggest that the tail belongs to the big dragon and that Cedric's behaviour (shouting and pulling his dad's tail) is not appropriate. Comber (2001) calls this a sense of 'fairness' which children imbibe from their own experiences and bring to their interpretations of literature.

6.3 Looking for clues to make meaning

As in the Literature Circle sessions around the first book, I once again encouraged the children to look closely for detail. When they asked questions to make clearer meaning, I often reflected the questions back at them so that they would look closer to find the answers themselves.

6.3.1 Mummy dragon or daddy dragon?

Soumi: It was nearly bed time, what do we have here?

Multiple children: Daddy dragon. Angry.

Soumi: Angry daddy?

Naima: No, that is daddy dragon.

Soumi: How do you know that it is a daddy dragon?

Naima: His head.

Soumi: What about a mummy dragon?

Naima: Mummy dragon will have eyelashes to it.

Soumi: Mummy dragon has eyelashes. That's very clever of you Naima.

Soumi: So does this dragon have eyelashes?

Multiple children: No. He has hair here. [Pointing to the bigger dragon's beard.]

(Second LC, P2, five participants, Phase I)

In this excerpt from the first Literature Circle session, the children consistently referred to the parent dragon as the 'dad'. The children, particularly Naima, argued that since the bigger dragon had a 'small beard' and 'no eyelashes', it could not be female. This indicates a willingness to notice and infer information from the visual clues, particularly those related to familiar stereotypical identifications of gender.

This discussion, however, took another turn a little later in the session. At the end of the session when the recording devices were turned off, Najab was reading the book once more on his own and reached the blurb. To his astonishment, he discovered that in the blurb the big dragon was referred to as the 'mum', and not the 'dad' as they had all assumed the parent figure to be! He also noticed that the author called the young dragon 'Cedric'. It was puzzling for him since the storybook dragon was also called Cedric. The issue of names has been left inconclusive and equivocal throughout the book. It is only when the reader reads the endpapers that there is evidence and confirmation of the reader's doubts. In the absence of definite answers, the children navigated the information and used clues from the text to support their ideas. Reading the endpapers, however, challenged and even overturned their understanding. But none of them expressed disagreement with the blurb. This could be attributed to the nascent stage in their development of critical thinking, due to which they seemed to displayed lack of confidence in challenging textual authority. This lack of confidence, however, is predictable at this early stage; there were signs of increased textual awareness and critical literacy demonstrated by the children as the fieldwork progressed, which I have discussed later.

6.3.2 Clues in the book-within-the-book

My plan to offer as little support as possible was proving successful when I saw that the children were able to collaboratively answer questions they had about the text. In this instance, the participants were hearing about the storybook dragon who is badly behaved at first. The text says that he teases the trolls, but then, shortly after, the text informs us that he shares the pies with the trolls. Just after I read out this part of the text, one of the children asks:

? [asking about the dragon]: Is he bad or nice?

Soumi: What do you think? Is he bad or nice?

All: Nice. He has not eaten the princess.

(Second LC, P1, four participants, Phase I)

The P1 children appeared more dependent on the visual than on the verbal text. Despite the fact that the good deed of the dragon was written in the seventh spread, the children relied on the visual information. They saw that the princess was safe on top of the tower and smiling. They, therefore, concluded that the dragon was nice. He might have abducted the princess with wicked intentions, however he was evidently treating her right. In a simple explanation the children agree that since he had not eaten the princess, he must be good.

6.4 Reversing traditional schemas

The children showed familiarity with the various symbols and tropes of the fantasy and fairy tale world. These are schemas that are popular in childhood, and are the products of the sociocultural milieu in which the children are brought up. While the children are from a different home culture, they are at the same time immersed in a Scottish/ Western culture, which draws a lot of its signs and signifiers from popular culture sources like books, music, films and television. Children attending school can hardly stay immune to these influences. For instance, the popularity of movies like *Frozen* (2013) and *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) and the materiality of the artefacts related to the movie franchises, have been absorbed in the sociocultural consciousness of children. Thus these symbols and tropes become a part of the established cultural schema with which children like these participants are growing up, and they inform the anticipation the readers have when reading texts that involve such characters.

As I have discussed in the textual analysis chapter (Chapter Three), Gravett plays with established schemas and often subverts them to bring about an unexpected twist in the tale. While reading about the bad dragon who captures the princess, wants to put her in a pie, and harasses the trolls, the children expected predictable outcomes, with the traditional schemas playing out. They were anticipating the arrival of a heroic prince who would rescue the princess from the clutches of the fearsome dragon. However, the narrative in this picturebook foils their expectations. Here are a few examples of where the familiar schemas have been turned on their heads.

6.4.1 The princess kissing… (the dragon!)

From the discussion, it was clear that the children knew that the princess was captured by the dragon and that they expected a prince to rescue her eventually. When they saw the princess kissing the storybook dragon, they were taken aback. There are two likely reasons for this reaction. One reason might be their shock and disbelief at the subversion of the expected schema while the second might be cultural, a reaction to the act of kissing itself. Some of the participants behaved in a coy and shy manner, possibly because for Asian or Pakistani families the act of kissing is not usually acceptable, nor are romantic matters explicitly discussed. Children especially are usually kept away from such influences and 'grown up' notions. Thus, seeing the two characters kissing each other goodnight, in full view of the others, threw them into a fit of embarrassed giggles.

To return to the first reason, there was a degree of shock value in the image of the princess kissing the dragon which went against the established fairy tale schemas in the children's understanding. Children's 'knowledge of (and discussion about) the characteristics of literary genres like fairy tales rested upon the bedrock of their intertextual connections' (Sipe 2008, p 143). They formed or adjusted to new ideas by linking this knowledge across cases or 'criss-crossing'. This (criss-crossing) is linked to Cognitive Flexibility Theory (Jones & Spiro 1994), mentioned earlier in the chapter, explaining the fluidity of the receptive cognitive structures that are modified with each new piece of information received (Sipe 2008). The children had to adapt their existing schemas to fit the princess kissing the dragon, which they did by reacting to it and discussing it in the Literature Circle.

6.4.2 'How about gingerbread?'

The participants also showed familiarity with traditional fairy tale schemas by inquiring about some absences. The fifth spread shows the parent dragon reading the book to the young dragon, with the open storybook in the background. During the Literature Circle with the younger P1 children, I read out the entire written text on the page for the group. Interestingly, Saleem interrupted me before I finished reading out that page with a question of his own. And as is evident from the excerpt from the transcript, I missed acknowledging his comment in my haste to finish reading the complete text.

> S: Will I read? '**Cedric the dragon, is a bright angry red. He's never, his whole life, not once been to bed. At night-time, when everyone else is asleep, he noisily prowls through the tower, then leaps down to the bridge to be nasty and sly and torment the trolls who by nature are shy. And that makes him hungry, he takes**

them to the skies, grabbing princesses to turn into pies. Or occasionally crumbles, or sometimes, just toast. If crumbles or pies would take too long to roast. At the end of each day…'

Saleem: How about gingerbread?

S [continues reading]: '…**he shouts out the refrain, tomorrow, I will do it all over again.**' Hmm… So what do you think of this little story?

(Second LC, P1, four participants, Phase I)

In the above excerpt, Saleem, through his quiet and overlooked comment demonstrates his ability to link together features from different stories in similar contexts. The mention of different items of food and cooking reminds Saleem of 'gingerbread', a food item that has intertextual links to various traditional tales, especially the *Gingerbread Man* and *Hansel and Gretel*. This episode could perhaps be extended to argue that Saleem is able to form interconnections and intertextual links within his range of reading experiences. At the same time, this episode demonstrates that the young readers noticed some absent tropes that they expected to find as part of the fairy-tale like picturebook.

This episode provides an example of the Intertextual category from my analysis rubric, which has evolved from Sipe's second category, 'making intertextual connections' – associative, analytical and synthesizing links. In the previous chapter, I mentioned associative intertextual connections when the children referred to *The Gruffalo* and other similar popular cultural texts. This instance of the missing 'gingerbread' is an example of an analytical link where an intertextual association was made and then the similarities and differences between the texts are described (Sipe 2008). Although this is a very brief comment – 'How about gingerbread?' – it does give us a glimpse of Saleem accessing the schema he has formed involving fairy tales and food, and subsequently verbalising this thought in his brief and easy-to-overlook question.

6.5 Emotions and what the children 'read'

From the questions I asked them initially and from the visual and verbal narrative itself, the participants started noticing the expressions of the characters. Talk would often come round to the 'look' of the character. Because emotions are nonverbal, the best way of describing them is through using a range of words, but eventually, language too is limited in conveying complex emotional states, while 'a visual image can potentially evoke a wide range of emotions circumventing the relative precision of words' (Nikolajeva 2012, p 278).

In earlier discussions, we have seen the participants trying to replicate the emotions by spontaneously enacting them. In this section, I note two instances where the participants are seen to negotiate meaning by using new or unfamiliar vocabulary.

6.5.1 Moody dragon

During the reading of this book, the children volunteered a number of words that attempted to describe the emotions of the characters. In the following extract the children are seen to use three different words to describe the expression of the 'daddy' dragon in two spreads (seventh and eighth).

> Soumi: He wants daddy to read the book again. And what is daddy looking like?
>
> Masood: Sad.
>
> Saleem: No. Moody.
>
> Soumi: Yeah, he looks a bit moody, does he not? That's a good answer.
>
> [Turning the page now.] Right, so what's happening here?
>
> Saleem: The big dragon is tired.

(Second LC, P1, four participants, Phase I)

The children notice and interpret the expressions of the characters and use different adjectives to describe the expressions – which range from 'sad' to 'tired'. However, 'moody' was not a word that I expected the P1 students to use. There were several instances of unexpected (for me as a researcher) and higher level responses in terms of vocabulary as well as analytical and cognitive meaning making throughout the fieldwork.

6.5.2 Learning new vocabulary

Over several readings, there was some discussion around the eyes of the characters and the way the eyes appeared on different pages. Here is an example of the big dragon nearly falling asleep while reading.

> Soumi: Who is sleepy?
>
> Masood: The big dragon. What happened here?
>
> Soumi: What happened to his eyes? I don't know what happened?
>
> Saleem: That is how dragons went to sleep with its eyes open [sic].

(Second LC, P1, four participants, Phase II)

In the above excerpt, Saleem is explaining to his friend Masood that dragons sleep with their eyes open. Despite the fact that I started by asking the question 'who is sleepy?', he was unable to link 'sleepy' with the dragon's drooping eyelids. This is an example of these particular children creating their own meaning from the visual text, without needing interpretation, help or indeed, validation from me.

In the following excerpt, we see the children discussing another phenomenon – the wink. Cedric in the seventh spread is seen cajoling his 'dad' to read the book once again. The children had the following discussion teasing out the possible meanings of this action.

> Masood: *Ismei iski aankh thoda closed hai, woh so raha hai.* [His eye is slightly closed in this one, he is sleeping.]
>
> Soumi: *Achcha, aur yeh wala aankh mein kya ho raha hai? Ek aankh.* [OK. And what's happening to the other eye?]
>
> Masood: *Ek aankh kholi hai, ek aankh band hai.* [One eye is open and one eye is closed]
>
> Soumi: So, what is this called?
>
> Masood: Woh yun karte. [We do like this – attempting to close one eye]
>
> Soumi: When do you do this? One eye closed and one eye open?
>
> Masood: Woh na, who aankhon mein yun yun karke eyes dikhate hai. [They do like this… attempting to wink again]
>
> Soumi: Haan, cartoons mein? [Do they…? In cartoons?]
>
> Masood: *Uska gol aata hai.* [It comes in rounds] [I think he is referring to emojis that have winking faces]
>
> Soumi: *Usko bolte hai*, 'winking'. *Kya bolte hain*? [It's called 'winking'. What is it called?]
>
> Masood: Winking.
>
> Soumi: *Aur koi wink kab karta hai?* [And when does one wink?]
>
> Masood: Jab cartoon khatam honewala hota hai. [When the cartoon is about to finish – referring to some cartoon he as possibly watched]
>
> Soumi: Haan. Or otherwise kab wink karte hain? Zain, when else do you wink? When you are sad or when you are happy or when you are excited?
>
> Zain: Happy.

There is no reference to the wink in the verbal text on this spread. The only written words on the page are the words of the storybook, which the bigger dragon is seen reading. The rest of the information on the page is visual, with the body language of the two dragons the most telling aspect. What is notable is that the expressions of the two characters could not be more different. The children noticed the difference of expressions and commented on it too.

Masood notices that Cedric has closed one eye and says that Cedric is sleeping. However, in the next few lines, we see that Masood realises that this is not sleeping. It is quite a different sort of action – he tries to copy it a few times. He also attempts to remember where he has seen the same action before and realises that he has seen it in cartoons and 'emojis'. Finally, I give him the word for this action – 'winking' and he continues to try and link it to his experience of the action outside the book world. Zain, who was quiet for the most part of this exchange, replies, when asked, that people do this action when they are happy. 'Happy' might not be the most appropriate word for the emotion behind the action of winking, but this exchange shows that the children have learned a new word related to expressions from the book. There were several such instances where the children showed evidence of acquiring new vocabulary and then trying to use it in their own words. Language acquisition is one of incidental advantages of a project like this. In this particular case, this was even more gratifying, since one of the aims of the project was to help improve their emotional engagement. At every instance of acquiring new language, the schema for the related emotion also expands. The children didn't know the word 'wink', however they did know the action (ekphrasis), and they had encountered it in before in other contexts (emojis). The children were aware of what they wanted to say, at the same time they knew that they didn't know the exact term for the action seen on the page, which shows a metacognitive self-awareness. In the absence of the relative precision of words, the only way to communicate understanding is to replicate it. As Nikolajeva (2012) says, emotions are non-verbal and they often have to be enacted in an embodied manner to demonstrate understanding. Linking it to Kramsch's view of embodied language learning (2009), knowing the words to describe an emotion or an action is one of the first ways of recognising emotions and therefore understanding someone's Theory of Mind. This example shows how the children were learning language related to emotions, expanding

their schemas related to the new word and adding it to their previous understanding of 'happy' in this case, and expanding their emotional literacy – both verbal and cognitive.

6.5.3 Performative responses – identifying with the characters

On several occasions, the children demonstrated their understanding of the context and the emotions by enacting the word or adjective. In the above example on winking, the children replicate the action of the young dragon. In the instance below, the child is imagining the reaction of the dragon.

> Soumi: What is he saying?
>
> Multiple children: Again, again! Why is he saying so many agains. [Everyone laughing]
>
> ?: What is he doing?
>
> Soumi: what is he doing?
>
> ?: He is moving his tail. Ouch!
>
> Soumi: Who is saying ouch?
>
> Multiple children: The daddy dragon.

(Second LC, all 5 participants, Phase II)

Here, the dragon is not in shown the scene, so the reader cannot ascertain his reaction from looking at his face or body. In addition, the written text gives no indication of the older dragon's unhappiness or displeasure. However, one of the children (identity unclear from the recording) exclaims 'Ouch' to show the discomfort of the bigger dragon.

During this reading, the atmosphere of the Literature Circle was light-hearted. As mentioned above, every time I read the word 'again', the children would repeat it after me. Whenever they saw the same word in the pages of the book, they started reading it aloud with exaggerated expressions and voice modulation. Mostly, these enactments were in keeping with the expressions of the young dragon who was starting to get annoyed. In one case, one of the children took the initiative to give voice to the bigger dragon. The child spontaneously performed this action in the moment and did not need any prompting or encouragement from me. This shows that the children were immersed in the story world and had started to identify with the characters of their own accord. There are several instances where the children are seen to be wholly engaged and feeling for the characters on the pages. This directly relates to one of the aims of the study, investigating how

children can emotionally relate to the picturebook character as well as develop their Theory of Mind. Sipe classified these types of responses under his 'Transparent' category. From the point of view of the visual/cognitive analysis rubric that I adapted from the visual journeys project, this can be classified under the Referential type of response that encapsulates 'interpreting the text via immersive or empathic identification'. As discussed above, this is an example of immersive identification where the child is uncritically supporting the actions of the character (Nikolajeva 2014).

6.5.4 Emotion ekphrasis and its replication in performance

As elaborated in the textual analysis chapter (Chapter Three), *Again!* provides a number of opportunities to scrutinise expressions and discuss emotions. The creative activities I developed to explore this book produced a rich harvest of visual data.

6.5.4.1 Annotations

In my analysis of this book, I discussed peritextual features such as the use of post-it notes and graffiti in the visual text. In one of the extension activities, I asked the group to annotate copies of spreads from the book using post-it notes.

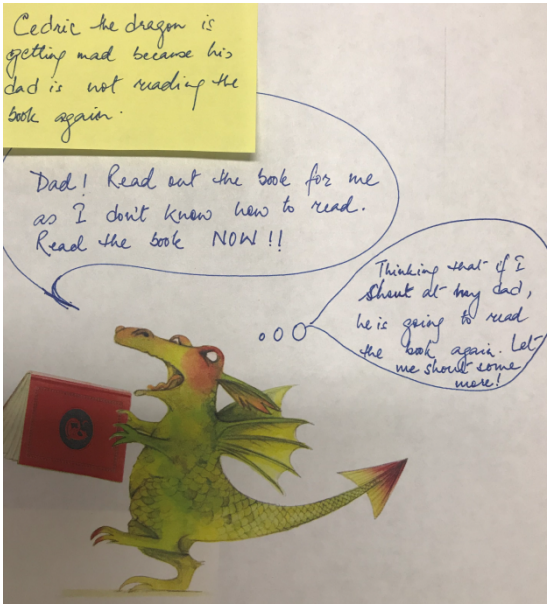

Figure 6. 1 Annotations in *Again!*

The image above is an example produced by one of the P1 students (name unclear). Since he had a lot of things to say and was not able to write quickly, I offered to write what he thought Cedric might be saying. The post-it note on top of the spread provides the context of the scene: 'Cedric the dragon is getting mad because his Dad is not reading the book again.' In this case, the child is interpreting what Cedric *feels,* specifically his anger.

Enacting the creative dialogues, the child pretended to *be* the angry dragon throwing a tantrum and shouted out the words while I wrote them down in the speech bubble. He was *saying*, 'Dad! Read out the book for me, as I don't know how to read. Read the book NOW!!!' He also imagines the reason that Cedric is asking his father to read the book instead of reading it himself. In the thought bubble, child imagines what Cedric is *thinking*: 'Thinking that if I shout at my Dad, he is going to read the book again. Let me shout some more!' This is a very clear example of the child identifying with Cedric and verbalises what Cedric might think, feel and say in that situation.

The children demonstrate their interpretation of Cedric's emotion ekphrasis through creative dialogues as well as spontaneous performance even though the activity (annotation) did not explicitly call for performance.

In the annotations shown below, the children have clearly focussed on the facial expressions of the characters and connected them with their (the characters') mental states and emotions. While some of the children wrote their replies in speech bubbles and on post-it notes, others, who were not confident enough to write their answers, used emoticon stickers to show how the characters felt and justified their choices. The children asked me to write down the reasons they chose a particular emoticon.

6.6 Emotions and the mother tongue

Among the participants, Masood was one of the two children who mostly used Urdu in their responses. As I have discussed elsewhere, Masood was going through the 'silent phase' in his English learning career. He already knew Urdu and Portuguese, but had a very rudimentary beginner's grasp of English, categorised as 'New to English' based on the EAL rubric mentioned in Chapter Five. Due to the fact that he didn't speak English fluently, his classmates and the other participants informed me on a few occasions that 'he does not speak' (in Urdu - '*Woh nahin bolta*'). This was complicated by the fact that he had a pronounced lisp and a stammer. He was not highly responsive in his group, and the majority of his answers were in Urdu. However, in examining the transcripts of the Literature Circle discussions related to this book, I noticed a remarkable development.

The last three spreads of *Again!* are an explosion of emotion. These are strong moments of intensity and the children's reactions mirrored the emotions felt by the characters in these spreads. Most of them expressed their shock at seeing the dragon blazing fire at the storybook in his anger and frustration. However, the most curious phenomenon was

Masood speaking at great length. He had much to say and was not holding back. Given his hesitation to speak English, he used Urdu to express himself. In the following excerpt, we can see that Masood is wholly engaged, and his responses are direct answers to my questions. While Saleem is trying to interject, it is Masood who is leading the conversation. In the excerpt below, taken from the third phase, I have asked the children to talk about the thirteenth spread. The young dragon is angry and trying to read the book himself. He is seen holding the book upside down, which causes the book contents – the characters, scenery and the written lines – to fall and crash to one corner of the book.

Saleem: And the castle is broken.

Soumi: And the castle is broken? What is happening to Cedric?

Masood: *Woh book pad raha hai. Gusse mein pad raha hai*. [He is reading the book. He's reading in anger]

Soumi: Okay*, achccha. Aur yahaan par kya ho raha hai?* [Okay, and what's happening here?]

Saleem: He is playing fire.

Masood: *Aur bade dragon ne pakad liya.* [and the big dragon caught it]

Saleem: …and he is saying 'again'.

Soumi: Yes, he is really angry and he opened the book. *Aur, uske mooh se ek fire nikla.* [And fire came out of his mouth]

Masood: *Haan, lagta hai usko fire lagne wala hai. Dragon ko.* [Looks like the dragon might get caught in the fire]

Soumi: *Woh* fire *se* hole *ho gaya itna bada sa*. Right? [So, the fire has a made a big hole in the book.] And what are the characters of the book doing?

Masood: *Bada fire kardiya woh apne mooh se.* [He's made a big fire from his mouth.]

Soumi: Hmm *bada fire. Aur yahaan par kya ho gaya?* [And what happened here?]

Masood: A*ur princess, gir gayi. Woh climb kari. isne fire kardiya, usne gussa kardiya, aur bachane laga. Aur yeh gussei mein hai. Yeh dragon.* [And the princess fell off. She climbed up. He (young dragon) made the fire. That dragon (story world dragon) got angry and started rescuing. And he is still in anger. This dragon (young dragon).]

Soumi: And the princess wants to runoff.

Masood: *Princess ko pakad raha hai. Kyonki who gir na jaaye.* [He (the storybook dragon) is holding the princess so she does not fall off.]

Soumi: Okay, and that is the end of the book. What does this say?

Saleem: It's a post.

Soumi: It's like a post. Do you know what it says? 'Fire exit'.

Saleem: Fire exit?

Masood: *Ismei likha hua* that*, who big fire hogaya.* [It says here, that there is a big fire.]

(Second LC, all 5 participants, Phase III)

This long excerpt is notable for the sheer number of responses in Urdu that were forthcoming from Masood. Here we see him highly responsive and seemingly not conscious of his stammer. The fact that, in this project, he is allowed and encouraged to speak in his most fluent language facilitates this surge of excited engagement as well as the high proportion of verbal responses.

The example supports the notion that high emotional engagement leads us to speak in the language with which we are most comfortable. In such situations, we also tend to be less self-conscious than we otherwise would be (c.f. Dewaele 2004; Dewaele & van Oudenhoven 2009; Dewaele & Wei 2013, among others, investigating the links of emotions and language use in multilinguals). In the case of Masood, at no other point during the initial discussions was he as animated or responsive. He perhaps would not have been as articulate if the subject had stimulated or engaged him emotionally. The emotional intensity of the subject and context as well as his being allowed to use his mother tongue acted in tandem to lead to this moment where Masood was unusually and highly animated in expressing himself and offering his interpretations.

In the initial interviews with teachers, Masood's class teacher had mentioned that he did not speak much in class and had recommended to take part in this project on this basis. She hoped that in doing so, he might overcome his habitual shyness and hesitation. Over the three phases, the environment of the Literature Circle seemed to provide him the comfort and confidence to make his opinion heard. He was, of course, making progress in his regular schoolwork too, so his vocabulary presumably improved through his literacy work in school. However, his teacher, even at the end of P1 and beginning of P2, marked him out as habitually shy and reticent when it came to reporting his work in the classroom. Thus it was gratifying to see his enthusiastic responses and participation in the discussion quoted above.

6.7 Emotions and colours

In my literature review, I had discussed the important links between emotions and colours. In the second phase of fieldwork, the Literature Circle discussions focussed on activities where this connection was emphasised. The participants engaged well with the activities designed to focus on the expressions as well as the colours of the characters.

6.7.1 Cedric gets angry: 'his face is angry his tail is angry…'

At several points, the children refer to the emotions of the characters and the link with colours. Here is a brief example in which Malina demonstrates that she understands the meaning of the colour red in the context of the story.

> Malina: The baby dragon is getting angry.
>
> Soumi: How do you know?
>
> Malina: Because look. Because his eyes are red.

The following section elaborates the connection with emotions and 'emotion ekphrasis'.

6.8 A summary of relevant findings

Knowledge of book-related metalanguage and 'book-talk'

At the start of the chapter I had noted the differences in the children from Primary One and Primary Two classes. Those differences however levelled out by the second and third phases. In the previous chapter I have documented how some children had demonstrated prior familiarity with terms related to books such as 'author', 'illustrator' etc. during the first phase of the project. I was interested in seeing if the children would use any of those terms without being prompted, and both Primary One and Primary Two children remembered the terms and used them in the discussions during the second phase. For this book, we also discussed words like 'publisher', 'double-spread' etc., which would add to their 'book-talk' metalanguage and help develop their metalanguage skills.

Expanding notions about picturebooks

One of the major findings in this chapter, consistent with the previous chapter, is that the participants showed evidence of learning from their experience of exploring the previous books. They then used that information and appeared more equipped when engaging with the new books. In addition, they were better able to negotiate the difference and novelty of

each book. With *Again!* as previously with *Wolves*, the children demonstrated delight and thrill at encountering the special tactile features within the narrative. This implies that the children are able to assimilate the learnings from one experience of reading and apply it to another context. This fits in with one of the secondary aims of the project, which was to broaden children's awareness of the range of picturebooks by exposing them to metafictive picturebooks. This would help widen their creative imagination.

Replicating metalepsis

The children were able to make meaning from the many disparate metafictive features within the text. They are able to successfully decode visual puzzles from the context. The example of meaning making from a metaleptic picture mentioned earlier in the chapter is strong evidence of the children's visual skills. The following image was handed in by a child (a girl) in the third and final phase of the fieldwork. She recreates an early scene from the book in which Cedric is happy and cajoling his 'Mama' (by this time the children had realised that the older dragon is the mother and not the father as they had assumed initially) to read the book.

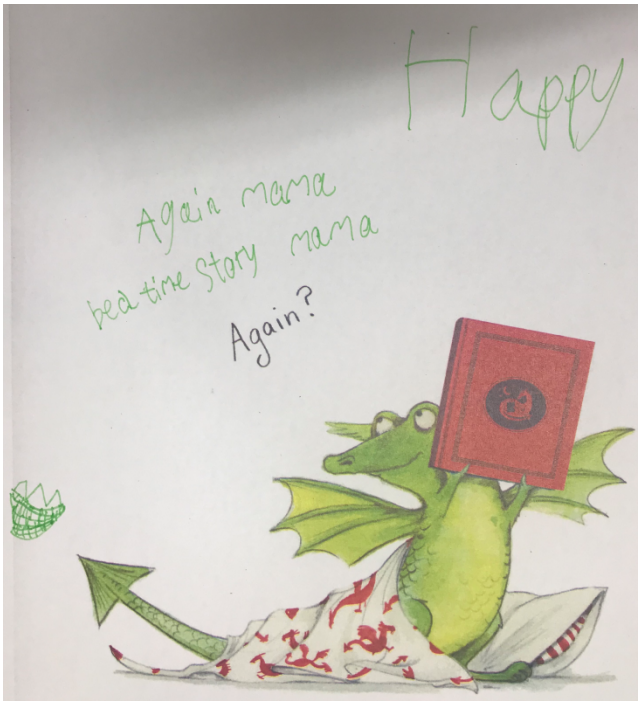

Figure 6. 2 Annotation in *Again!* - Metalepsis

The dialogue – 'Again Mama. Bedtime story Mama' – is ungrammatical and was written by the girl while she was speaking in toddler-tongue and toddler-voice. Once again, there is a performative aspect to the task. Further, we can see that the child has added the end of the tail of the older dragon partially visible and disappearing from the edge of the page.

This is her attempt to complete the scene, and the position of the tail is such that it roughly aligns Cedric's pleading eyes gazing up at his mother. This is evidence of an acute level of observation, of making meaning, as well as of adopting the artistic techniques in the original text. Even if it were mere copying, it still demonstrates a high level of awareness of the picturebook's visual codes and clues.

Intertextual connections

In their discussion of the book, the children demonstrated a strong ability to make intertextual connections. They made associative and analytical connections with previous reading and predicted the behaviour of book characters based on their earlier knowledge. At the very start of the narrative, Masood predicted that the dragon is going to breathe fire, before having read the entire story. In another related instance, another child mentions factors that are absent from the narrative, which is further evidence of the young readers creating crisscrossing links between new and old narratives. We also find out that children are able to adapt their earlier schemas about books and fairy tale characters and scripts based on new information found in the text, which foiled and subverted their expectations. Thus the children were able to expand their knowledge of these metafictive features, one of the aims of the project.

Colours, emotions, expressions and the language of feelings

Again! is a book which provides the reader with numerous opportunities to discuss use of colours and facial expressions used in narrative. The Literature Circle discussions and activities explored the children's awareness of emotions and examined ways to interpret them. The children demonstrated that their ability to notice emotion ekphrasis, to talk about them as well as identify with the feelings of the characters are expanding with each exploration. As discussed in the first section of the literature review (Chapter Two), emotions are movements or responses, rooted in the body, which are unconscious neural patterns, which come before any feeling. Feelings on the other hand emerge from *perceiving* these neural patterns generated by the brain. Physical expression of emotions, or ekphrasis, often happens unconsciously. The children were showing an ability to decode the ekphrasis at key points in the narrative. Simultaneously the collaborative meaning making in the group was also bringing up opportunities to discuss vocabulary related to these emotions.

Masood, with his enthusiastic response to the climax of the narrative, draws attention to the strong link between mother tongue and emotions. Examining the evidence presented earlier, we can make two assertions. Firstly, a subject and context of high emotional intensity can provoke a reticent talker into fluent response. Particularly, a context which invites conversation around the text like the Literature Circle which is particularly valuable for English as an additional language (EAL) learners in allowing them to move beyond their interpretations and participate in the construction of meaning (Arizpe et al. 2014). Secondly, the ability to use his mother tongue to express himself and his interpretations helped him voice his thoughts without hesitation and awkwardness.

Identification and performative responses

The children have shown evidence of understanding the emotional states of the characters. With growing comfort in the Literature Circle and a greater familiarity with the text, the children are seen to volunteer their thoughts and opinions on the text. They extend the meaning of the text and contexts. They also experience the narrative in imaginative and multimodal ways, thus paving the way for improved multimodal literacies.

I discussed in the literature review chapter how an active imagination paves the way for understanding what other might be feeling or experiencing. To take the point made in the previous paragraph further, one could argue that if the children could feel for these characters, and emote on their behalf, they are likely to be able to use this skill in real-life situations as well. A well-developed Theory of Mind can help children relate to real people around them. To extend this argument a well-developed Theory of Mind can also help develop empathy skills in individuals, a crucial component in positive human interaction.

Overall, this chapter's findings are largely consistent with the aims of the project. The next chapter will be my final 'findings' chapter where I discuss the findings from *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*.

As I conclude this chapter, I return to my journal notes. With the second book, I noticed a growing confidence in myself as a researcher as well as an educator. This was especially noticeable in the second phase, where I saw the participants recalling the 'book-talk' vocabulary learnt in the previous phase. The children remembered the lessons on close reading and 'looking for clues' in the picturebooks. This helped me feel assured that the project's aim of using the books as training fields was being achieved slowly but surely. The children were forming their distinct voices and opinions and while they still would

surprise me often with their unexpected interpretations, they were developing recognisable personalities and roles within the group. In the next chapter, these voices become stronger with the children becoming ever more confident at negotiating the verbal visual matrix.

Chapter 7 Analysis of *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*

This chapter, which serves as the last of the 'findings' chapters, presents the highlights from the reading sessions around two picturebooks: *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts* (2013) which depicts the exploits of a mouse who comes across an old-fashioned picturebook of dangerous predators. Both these books have been discussed and thematically analysed in the third chapter of this thesis. As mentioned in the previous chapter, with the children becoming more aware as individuals and as a group of what to expect from these Literature Circle sessions, I was able to consciously reduce the amount of support and scaffolding provided to the children in these discussions.

As before, the chapter is organized according to the prominent 'moments of intensity'. The 'moments' are analysed and supported with evidence from the verbal, visual and performative data gathered in Literature Circles. Finally, the findings are synthesized at the end of the chapter.

7.1 The cover page

In terms of my documenting the findings based on the 'moments of intensity', there were several notable moments which developed around the endpapers, the multilevel narration, the intertextual instances and the tactile features, to mention a few. The first big moment was when I presented the book to the children. The cover of the book itself presented an attention-grabbing, intense moment. In the section that follows, I have noted my observations and findings from the children's reactions to the cover page.

7.1.1 Primary one views with an analytical eye

The Primary One participants accorded an excited welcome as I introduced the new picturebook. After *Wolves* and *Again!*, this was the third book introduced to the children in our Literature Circle. The reaction of the children showed an evolution from the time they encountered the first book. As discussed in Chapter Five, the children had asked many questions about the visuals on the cover page and the endpapers of *Wolves!*, the first book. Their questions included: 'Why is the book called *Wolves* but has a rabbit's photo on the cover? Why are there two covers – the first one white and the second one red? What is the brown furry background that has the letters stuck to it?' With this book, their approach was more 'analytical' in looking at the text (Sipe 2008). These responses are categorised as the

'Referential' type of response discussed in the 'analysis rubric' in Chapter Four. The children seemed to notice the expressions on the characters' faces and tried to understand the emotions they were expressing. For instance, despite being unable to read the words, the P1 children were able to decipher that there was an 'angry' lion on the cover. These observations can be linked to the discussions around the previous title (*Again!*) where there was much emphasis around expressions of the characters and their emotions, as documented in Chapter Six. The children seemed to be using their newly primed observation skills to look for clues related to the character's state of mind.

They also started by noticing the action unfolding on the cover page and attempted to attribute **intent** and a **cause and effect** correlation to the scene. This could be categorised as 'inferential' responses where the children are seen making elaborate and interpretive connections. They noticed the paint dripping down the lion's face on the cover and one of the P1 boys thought that it was 'jam' or 'honey' which 'the lion wanted to eat'. This, on the other hand, is a literal identification and description of the images on the cover page. While in this instance they were wrong about the 'jam' or 'honey', it is noteworthy that the children were not hesitant in putting forward their interpretation. This can be viewed as improved confidence in being able to speak in a familiar small-group setting. Additionally, this serves as an instance where the children are seen learning to use newly gained insights to make meaning from partially familiar situations. Incidentally, 'jam' also serves as an intertextual reference, which I discuss later in one of the following sections.

7.1.2 Primary making analytical links and connections

The children of Primary Two had a similar reaction to the cover page as the Primary One participants. The following extract is from the transcript of the first discussion where the children were making sense of the visual narrative by naming the elements present:

> Soumi [pointing on the page]: What about this?
>
> Javed: Little mouse
>
> Soumi: Aha, 'Little Mouse'? And what is this?
>
> Javed: And the illustrator is also Emily Gravett. **Big Book of Beasts**. That's a beast, that's a mouse. That's a cheetah. Cheetahs run fast. That's a lion. Some lion is good. Some are not.

(First LC, P2, five participants, Phase I)

Farrell, Arizpe and McAdam (2010) have suggested that individual readers gain access to any provided text by naming, labelling and making links and connections with prior experience. In the above example, Javed is demonstrating this familiarity with the different bookish terms like author, illustrator and the title. He also names the animals that he can see on the cover, drawing the distinction between 'a mouse' and 'a beast'. Through his pointing and gestures, he explains that a beast is a large animal like a cheetah or a lion. He also shares his knowledge of the qualities of a cheetah ('runs fast') and of a lion – some lions are 'good' and 'some are not'. I was unable to probe further at that point why he considered some lions bad, but later in the transcript, he clarifies that 'some lions' hunt and kill other animals, actions that he seemed to view negatively.

A little later in the same discussion, Najab is seen asking questions aloud to himself while looking at the cover page:

> Najab: Why is he painting? To distract her… To distract the tiger?
>
> Soumi: To distract the lion?
>
> Najab: Yeah…
>
> Soumi: He is painting because he wants to distract the lion?
>
> Najab: Yeah…so that he can run away quickly.
>
> Soumi: Hmm, run away. That's a fantastic idea.
>
> (First LC, P2, five participants, Phase I)

We can see Najab taking on an analytical role, first puzzling out (by wondering aloud) an element of the cover page and then attempting to make meaning of it himself. Najab is seen accessing the familiar predator-quarry schema and predicting the plot of the story. Using his anticipation skills, he readily assumes that the lion is going to chase and eat the mouse and that the mouse is using different strategies to escape the lion.

This is a sophisticated manner of thinking, achieved with very little help and clarification from me, the experienced reader. The children by this time were showing increased ability to assimilate the textual elements and utilising their newly acquired skills of interpreting complex visuals in a busy metafictive text.

7.1.3 The (not so) astonishing endpapers

When presented with the endpapers, the children were less shocked than in their encounter with *Wolves!* and more matter-of-fact, accepting and analytical about the disruptive and surprising features they meet. However, they questioned one of the features that came to their early notice. As the P2 participants were reading the title and the names of the author and illustrator, they asked 'whose book is this anyway?'. This led to an interesting discussion about authorship and what it means to be the one creating a book. One of the older children (Najab), who was able to read the title, was struck by the appearance of the title on the cover page with the author/illustrator's name crossed out: ~~*Emily Gravett's*~~ *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*. This feature, along with the presence of the paintbrush, serves a metafictive function, since it foregrounds the notion of authorship while problematizing the identity of the author. The presence of the mouse on the cover page prodded the children into noticing the tension between the different possible authors and agentive entities.

Along with authorship, the children debated the ownership of the book. Some thought that it still belonged to the author Emily Gravett, while the others argued that because the mouse owns the book 'now', it is only correct that the title should read *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*. This debate opened a space to engender a 'meta' level awareness, which reminded the children of the 'constructed-ness' of the book. I will return to 'meta' level awareness in greater detail in one of the following sections. The final word on 'whose book' it ought to be was had by my daughter Saanvi, who, at 7 years (Primary Three) also wondered recently, long after the fieldwork had ended, why the mouse has struck off the author's name from the title. Then, in a moment of clarity and distance that cut through several metafictive levels, she remarked that all this fuss is 'just silly because of course this book belongs to *me*, the *real* owner!'

7.1.4 Multilevel narration and multidiegesis

Just as the identity of the author of this title was debated and questioned by the children, the identity and role of the narrator too proved hard for the young participants to pin down. As discussed in Chapter Three, each double page spread in this picturebook is filled with a number of devices and features that create multiple levels at which the narration takes place. The first level is the 'original' book that has the images of the scary beasts. The second level is Little Mouse's book in which he has created his artwork to make the page less scary. Further, for the reader there is a third level where we see the 'actual' mouse and

the adjusted book together. The multiple features and levels of narration on each page draw the reader's eye as they vie for attention, affording 'alternative spatial pathways of reading' (Maine 2015, p 23). The reader's attention flows in one direction, and then upon encountering a new element, which is 'simultaneously present', gets disrupted, and starts flowing in another direction (Kress 2003, p 20). Ultimately the flow of the narrative becomes disjointed – this is one of the distinctive features of a metafictive narrative. When the children started looking at the book on their own during the Literature Circle meetings, they simultaneously started commenting on different features of the pages. Their excited reactions to the page corroborate this phenomenon of multiple demands on the reader's attention. They were seen exclaiming over different aspects of the first spread all at once. The variety in features was claiming their attention, as were the different characters on the page, so that this simultaneity ended up creating quite a commotion in the room. Despite the contradictory pulls of the dual narrative, the children were able to see Little Mouse's situation and follow 'his story', as we will see later on in this chapter. This is an example of children's ability to negotiate multilevel narratives and interpret complex visual and verbal synergy (Sipe 1998).

7.1.4.1 Multidiegesis

In a further twist to the narrative, we see the mouse acting as the extradiegetic narrator as well as a character in the story. The extradiegetic narrator, as explained earlier, is one with a perspective 'above' or 'outside' the text world. In the picturebook, the mouse writes himself into the text by drawing a caricature mouse that is yellow in colour. In each opening, on the first plane of narration, we see the large scary beast in the background and the yellow mouse painted in by Little Mouse; and in the second plane of narration, above the first plane, we see the extradiegetic narrator, Little Mouse himself who appears in the shape of a 'realistic' representation of a white furry mouse. The children were able to navigate this multilevel narration, differentiating between the white mouse who was the 'real mouse' according to them, and the yellow mouse who is 'drawn in' – Little Mouse's artistic rendering of himself. While looking at the spread with the shark, one of the children said, 'The mouse has drawn the yellow mouse so that the shark could chase it', understandably, while the 'white mouse' escapes. The children seemed to infer that Little Mouse has drawn himself into the book world, to act as a decoy.

Figure7. 1 *Little Mouse's Big Book Beasts*. The crab doublespread.

The following extract is from the transcript of the 'crab' opening (picture above). This is slightly different to the other spreads since we see two yellow playful mice along with the crab itself; in addition, there is Little Mouse who is trying to restrain the crab. The children's discussion takes on an explanatory tone as they describe how the white mouse ties up the menacing crab who is snapping its claws.

Javed: A paint. He is trying to make a [??] … The other mouse.

Soumi: What is the other mouse doing?

Javed: He is making a circle he is trying to trapped up

?: Hey look, another mouse and another mouse. He is drinking juice

Soumi: What are these two mice doing?

[Pause…]

Javed: He is trying to get trapped up

Soumi: Who?

Javed: The crab

Soumi: Ok. And what is the white mouse doing?

Javed: The white mouse, he is trying to pull up the tighter? Crab.

Soumi: And what is the crab doing?

Javed: He is snapping.

Soumi: And what is the mouse doing?

Javed: He is pulling them from the snap. His friends. Drinking water. And the paper. Here he is trying to swat

(First LC, P2, five participants, Phase I)

In this somewhat disjointed excerpt that seems to have a surfeit of mice, the participants are trying to make sense of the roles of each of the mice. In an absence of what Maine calls the 'right answer', the participants are 'pushed to justify their reasoning and accept alternatives' (2015, p 23). While the role of the white mouse is relatively clear as one who is trying to 'neutralise' the snapping, dangerous crab, the other two drawn-in mice pose somewhat of a conundrum, which makes the young readers feel that they ought to explain it. An unidentified child points to the two unexplained mice – 'Hey look!' – clearly an exclamation of surprise. When I follow it with the question, 'What are these two mice doing?' there isn't an answer forthcoming. There is a pause during which Javed tried responding, but he gives up and then he starts discussing the actions of the white mouse and not the other two yellow mice. This is an instance of a visual and verbal gap in the text (Iser 1978) that the reader is unable to fill readily and hence the meaning does not appear cohesive. Towards the end of the excerpt, Javed remarks that the two mice are 'his friends' (the friends of Little Mouse) who are drinking water/juice. In an instance of collaborative meaning making, the group is trying to 'smooth over' the textual and narrative gaps caused by the extradiegetic narrator and 'extra' characters, who seem to appear and disappear from one opening to the next, by providing their own reasoning and justifications.

7.1.4.2 Not real – 'he is only painting'

In another instance of keen observation and interpretation, one of the children remarked that the beasts are 'not real' – clearly the passivity of the fearsome beasts falling prey to the tricks of the mouse created the impression that only if the beasts are 'not real' can Little Mouse get away with his tricks. The following is an excerpt from a discussion of the owl spread.

> Soumi: If the mouse has got a parachute, what do you think he is going to do?
>
> Javed: He is going to eat the parachute?
>
> Soumi: Who is going to eat the parachute?
>
> Javed: The bird
>
> Najab: That's not real, he is only painting.

(First LC, five participants, Phase II)

Najab's almost matter-of-fact and detached reply to Javed's question, which suggests some kind of danger to the mouse, cuts through the crisis in the scene. It also cuts through the dual levels of narration. Najab's use of the word 'only' gives away the fact that he is quite

unimpressed by the menacing appearance of the owl, a natural predator for a mouse. He shows that he is aware that being at the first plane of the narrative, the owl is an inert and immobile image – 'only painting' and not a character who has the capacity to move and do things on the second, dynamic narrative plane on which the second mouse is acting out the story of 'escaping' from the predator.

These instances reveal the children's astute ability to navigate and negotiate a variety of narrative hurdles to make meaning, using all the visual, verbal, referential, and interpretive resources available to them. The repeated readings and the collaborative Literature Circle sessions provided the participants with the space to exercise their mental acuity. These complex picturebooks, therefore, show how picturebooks can act as 'training fields' for not only the children's emotional literacy (Nikolajeva 2014), but for a variety of creative meaning making and critical literacy skills.

7.1.5 Intertextual instances – evidence for make believe

On several occasions, the children referred to characters from other books and wove them into their intertextual meaning making process. I argue here that through these intertextual instances, we can gain insight into the participants' thinking. These act, not only as the props of 'make believe' (Walton 1993) but also as evidence that the children start to extend and exist in that make-belief text world.

One of the first intertextual references occurred when the children were struck by the drawings of the many beasts in the front endpapers. During the ensuing discussion, they mentioned other dangerous beasts they knew from books and real life as a 'life-to-text' reference. Further, as an intertextual and cultural reference, they mentioned the 'Gruffalo', referring to the eponymous character from Julia Donaldson's picturebook *The Gruffalo*. The children remembered the character of the Gruffalo with its fierce appearance for the second time (earlier while reading *Wolves*), particularly after seeing the opening of the owl. The story of *The Gruffalo* also has a mouse and an owl, from whom the mouse escapes. It is noteworthy that none of the children mentioned that the Gruffalo, according to the story, was a fictitious character created by the mouse in order to escape from the owl and other scary animals of the forest.

In the instance shared below, the P1participants are responding to the cover photo of the lion with paint dripping on the lion's face, which Masood interprets as 'jam'.

Soumi: What is happening here?

Saleem: Lion

Masood: *Woh Jam ko pakad raha hai. Lion who khane ko koshish kar rahai hai. Jam khata hai.* [He is trying to catch the jam. Lion is trying to eat that. He eats jam.]

Soumi: Jam? *Kaunsa jam*? [What jam?]

Masood: [Pointing to the dripping paint] *Yeh wala, shayad Rabbit ne phenk diya* [This one. Maybe Rabbit has thrown it away.]

Soumi: *Kaha hai Rabbit* [Where is Rabbit?]

Masood: *Yeh raha* [Here he is. (Pointing to the mouse)]

Soumi: *Yeh rabbit hai*? [Is this a rabbit?]

Masood: [Confused and smiling] *Nai mouse*. [No, mouse]

(First LC, P1, four participants, Phase I)

In the above extract, Masood recorded moving between the two languages (translanguaging), refers to 'jam' and 'Rabbit' in the same context and is clearly drawing on *Wolves*. Masood transposes the character of the rabbit from *Wolves* into the present story, linking the old character to a new context. At the same time, he is making interpretations of the text and predicting the character's behaviour. Since in *Wolves*, the Rabbit and the Wolf were sharing a jam sandwich in the alternate ending, he suggests that the Rabbit did not wish to finish the sandwich and threw it at the Lion. Masood had transposed the Lion in the current book with the Wolf's character in the earlier book. It is likely that the lion and the wolf are interchanged because of the predatory roles they have in the two narratives as well as in real life/nature. Masood is seen using the familiar predator-quarry schema and giving meaning to the current scene using plots of previously read books. Schema is thought to be shorthand for a longer sequence or pattern of events (Oziewicz 2015), and here we can see Masood using that shorthand to interpret the narrative of the new text he has encountered. Of course, towards the end of the extract, there is a humorous turn when he realises that he has been referring to the mouse while talking about the rabbit. His puzzlement underscores the fact that he was thinking of the small character of the mouse as the rabbit from another picturebook story. It seems as if the narrative of the picturebook is taking Masood on the imaginative 'ride' that Vermeule mentions, which is 'not a passive affair' (Vermeule 2010, p 21). We can see that Masood is actively imagining the 'back-story' to the first scene of this new picturebook narrative, creating what Sipe calls a 'palimpsest' (Sipe 2001). The 'back-story,' with its partially

erased and faintly visible lines, added by the young readers' interpretations, becomes the space upon which the new story gets written over creating a palimpsest.

The character of Rabbit from *Wolves* makes another appearance when the children looked at the third double page spread, which is the picture of the first scary beast, the lion. In the following extract, we see the three children Zain, Masood and Mohammed from Primary One interpreting the narrative elements on the page:

> Zain: There is a lion.
>
> Masood: The lion is eating the page. He tore it. The rabbit has ran [sic] away. [Pointing to the hole in the page in front of the lion's face.]
>
> Soumi: The mouse jumped through the hole and jumped over here?
>
> Masood: The rabbit beat the lion with the stick
>
> Zain: The mouse is coming here running back.
>
> Masood: How about the mouse over here? [Pointing to the next page where the mouse has 'escaped']
>
> Mohammed: The mouse is troubled. He is going away (??) [Sounds like 'sneakily'].
>
> (First LC, P1, four participants, Phase I)

The children are seen to interpret the scene in a fast and collaborative way (Short 1996) questioning and supporting each other's interpretations. They remark on the hole in the page, which no longer surprises them (another reminder of the *not so* astonishing endpapers). They seem to understand as a group, cohesively, that the hole in the page exists so that the 'troubled' mouse could escape. Masood again refers to the diminutive figure of the mouse as the Rabbit. It appears that Masood has a habit of miss-naming characters, often referring to the wolf in *Wolves* as the 'Were-rabbit', yet another example of making intertextual connections as discussed earlier. Nevertheless, these instances draw attention to the fact that the children are engaged with the narrative and *do* feel for the character of the mouse. Their collaborative chat creates an interpretive community (Sipe 1998), which helps them construct meaning from the generative discussion (Bland 2013). The children realise that the mouse is 'troubled', by using their imagination or what Vermeule refers to as 'imagining under guidance' of the plot and narrative devices (2010, p 21).

7.1.6 The scared mouse who is 'doing' something

The children noticed without hesitation that the mouse is 'scared' and the reason for his fear is the presence of the big wild beasts like the lion and the shark. However, what the children seemed to be most impressed with was that the mouse had the courage to do something about his fears. Each page is evidence of the actions the mouse takes to divest the scary beasts of their scariness. This is an observation which the children were able to make not from immersing themselves in the narrative, but by distancing themselves and firstly, viewing the text in its entirety and secondly, by gaining a 'meta' perspective of the text. The nature of this particular picturebook text is episodic; with a storyline that shows mouse reading the book, without much more development from one opening to the next. With each progressive page turn, the mouse encounters yet another fearsome beast which frightens him and seeks to neutralise (to borrow a military term) the threat. The neutralising devices and mouse's actions on each page engage the reader to get carried away in the subversive and victorious mood of each page. Viewing such a text in its entirety takes a sophisticated reading eye, as it requires different ways of reading and viewing (Anstey 2002). With features that create the need for different ways of reading and viewing, this book was effective in nurturing a critical eye in this young group of readers. Despite being carried away by the explosion of features in the picturebook, a book that would meet Sipe and McGuire's criteria of 'linguistic and visual playgrounds' (2008, p 283), the children were able to distance themselves and deduce that the mouse is scared and yet brave. Going back to the aim of the project to enhance affective engagement and develop emotional literacy, the children not only notice the emotion ekphrasis and interpret the emotions of the characters, they also critically interpret the overarching theme of the picturebook. The puny mouse, who appears scared of even the images of the big beasts of prey, overcomes his fears and bravely creates the final spread which is subversive and signals the mouse's victory over the symbolic beasts as well as over his inner fears. The victory of the mouse is an important lesson that offered me an opportunity as an educator to reinforce the virtues of overcoming one's fears. I was also able to explore it as a moment where I was not only watching the children navigate and interpret (Serafini 2012) the text but also learn from it.

The children's observation that Little Mouse uses his wit and ingenuity to overcome and escape his fears provided a teaching moment that the children retained. This was evident in their reflections towards the end of the longitudinal project. In the following excerpt, Najab,

a P2 participant, shows signs of identifying empathically with the intrepid mouse who, in spite of being afraid of these big beasts, takes action to make each beast less scary.

> Soumi: [*Pointing to The Big Book of Beasts volume*] What do you think the mouse is doing in this book?
>
> Najab: The mouse is running. This book tells you about all the beasts. And the mouse is running from them.
>
> Soumi: And the mouse is scared of all these beasts, right? What is the mouse doing?
>
> Najab: He is avoiding the beasts by doing stuff. First he steals off the roar, 'I don't like loud lions', puts mittens on him, then he turns the page.
>
> Soumi: So the mouse is scared of them, but he is still doing things, and at the end he is not scared any more.
>
> Najab: Yeah …. I liked about all the fears. It makes me feel less afraid of stuff.
>
> (Second LC, all five participants, Phase III)

In the above excerpt, it is the 'doing stuff' that catches Najab's attention. Najab lists the mouse's actions like 'he steals of the roar… puts mittens on him, then turns the page'; these actions, according to Najab, makes him feel 'less afraid' for Little Mouse as well as for *himself* when he identifies with the focaliser, i.e., the central character or the character from whose point of view the story is being told.

7.1.7 Tactile features

The children were thrilled with the peritextual and movable features, particularly the holes, which Little Mouse is supposed to have made by chewing through and also the flaps of the mittens. One of the first things the children noticed was that the mouse has made a hole so that he can escape the lion and 'run to the next page'. Javed was immediately able to connect the hole with the holes in the 'dragon book.'

At certain instances, the children had to turn the book upside down to read the text. For example, to read the text written on the 'mittens', the children had to turn the book over. This required a tactile engagement, echoing their experience with the earlier books, particularly *Again!*. Demonstrating their metafictive awareness, two of the children wondered what would happen if they turn the book over – would the mouse 'fall out' of the hole? Or would the writing and words 'fall' and tumble in a corner of the page? This provides evidence that they are linking the phenomenon observed in the previous book *Again!* with their experience of reading the current title. Their awareness of what is

possible in a book has been challenged by their new reading experiences. The shock they felt and the resistance they offered to the earlier picturebooks (*Wolves* and *Again!*) is no longer in evidence in their reading of the Little Mouse book. Instead, they seemed to have overcome their resistance and made predictions and suppositions using the unsettling features they co-opted from examining the previous titles. This finding supports Nikolajeva's argument that 'the more a text deviates from a script, the more attention and imagination it demands from the reader' (Nikolajeva 2014, p 35).

The origami instructions and shapes fascinated them and this continued until the book's final climactic opening where the readers have to fold and hold together all the flaps in a particular way, creating the final 'mouse monster'. This made-up monster is a collage (a 'collage beast') of all the dangerous features that the mouse had stolen from each of the previous scary beasts. This opening sees the transformation of the puny diminutive mouse into mythical beast inspiring terror into the beholder, and sparking off the readers' imagination at the same time. The materiality of the text, which includes its shape and the physicality, is foregrounded on this spread. This postmodern feature, which is referred to in Dresang's Radical Change Theory (2008) as a 'digital' feature, offers several 'haptic' affordances (Hateley 2013). Haptic engagement means engaging the sense of touch and in this case refers to texts that require interacting with the book using hands and fingers, just as one would when dealing with electronic texts in digital apps and e-readers which allows readers to move easily from one platform of reading to another.

However, this mouse-monster proved to be a tricky and fiddly construction to get right and also needed 'many hands' to hold the flaps in place in a specific sequence. The participants were required to co-construct a meaningful outcome from a scene which is both visually and tactilely disjointed, but working together, they managed.

7.1.8 Extending the narrative through performative response

As mentioned earlier, the participants often used the text as 'a platform for the children's own creativity or imagination' (Sipe 2008, p 86). The spontaneous oral and physical performances, which Sipe calls a 'carnivalesque romp' (ibid), extended the narrative and added a new dimension to their interpretation:

> Soumi: This little bit of tape says 'shhh'. Who has put the tape on lion's mouth?
>
> Malina: Mouse.
>
> Javed: He doesn't have a sound [goes shhhhhh shhhhhhh]

Soumi: Who doesn't have a sound?

Javed: The lion [Mimes a roar with no sound]

Soumi: Who has written all these scribbly bits?

All: The mouse

Soumi: And what has this say? It says, I do not like loud lions. And what is this?

Malina: It's a ROAR.

All: ROAR, ROAR.

(Second LC, all five participants, Phase III)

The video footage of this Literature Circle shows that while the children were 'ROAR'ing, they were simultaneously making big clawing motions with their hands and fingers, making menacing expressions with their faces and walking with big steps in slow motion. All of these actions together were supposed to convey the fierceness of the lion, and the miming was occurring spontaneously without any direction from me. Thus, the children are seen to manipulate the text (Sipe 2008) and extend it in different ways.

The following is another instance where the children bring the picturebook alive by exercising their imagination and launching into action spontaneously. The following extract is from one of the groups as they looked and responded to the rhinoceros spread. The onomatopoeic word 'thundery' gets a reaction from the children who are eager to demonstrate the action.

Najab: Rhinoceros. Yes, I was right.

Soumi: Do you think rhinos walk softly or walk with thundery feet?

All: [Making thundering noise with their feet]

Soumi: Yes! And what will happen if you go in front of a thundering rhino?

Javed: He will go in front of you? Stomp you?

[Stomping action/sounds with feet]

(Second LC, all five participants, Phase III)

In both the instances, the children show a degree of familiarity and identification with the fictitious characters on the page. This might be considered an imitation of the characteristics shown in the book or a reproduction of popular cultural notions of normative behaviour displayed by certain animals. From the perspective of the

visual/verbal rubric, the children were interpreting the different elements of the narrative as well as the images, with their actions indicating immersive identification with the rhinoceros. This also is an obvious performative response where the children, reacting to the stimulus of the text, feel affectively engaged enough to spontaneously replicate the actions of the wild beast. However, imitation of behaviour can also signify an internalisation of a certain situation. To extend this point further, the children were using their imagination and acting skills: they know it is not real, however, they still momentarily inhabited the fictional minds of the created characters – an exercise in metacognition and Theory of Mind. This could be related to Nikolajeva's notion of character and plot identification when the reader is unable to distance themselves from the identity/being of the character or the story world plot. With respect to Sipe's categories of children's expressive response, he used the 'transparent' category to show where the two worlds (of the reader's imagination and the story world) 'become superimposed – one transparent over the other' (Sipe 2002, p 477). Thus, the performative response is an indication of the children using their imagination to extend the narrative, understand and inhabit the minds of the characters, all the while engaging and exercising their Theory of Mind and expanding their emotional literacy skills.

7.1.9 Resistance through visual response

Sipe writes about the notion of 'talking back' where the children's engagement with the textual world is so firmly internalised that they comment on the plot, act out the text and project their voices to convey the emotions of the characters as well as extend the narrative (Sipe 2002, p477). These instances occur because children have their own set of resources, their 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti 2005), imbibed from their home and school environments. In addition, children have a strong sense of 'what's fair and what isn't' gathered through their own experiences (Comber 2001, p 170). These sensibilities often get expressed through their responses to literature. In this instance I would like to highlight the visual response that one of the participants had to this picturebook. Naima, one of the artists in the group of participants, was most engaged when drawing, colouring or creating something. She also demonstrated a strong sense of fairness when it came to 'good' and 'bad' behaviour adopted by the characters. It emerged as a particularly strong aspect of her recreations of certain scenes of this book. When the children were asked to recreate their favourite scenes from the picturebook and were given the freedom to choose their style and subject, Naima not only recreated the context of the text, she extended it and developed it based on the knowledge she gathered about the characters.

Reflective dialogue is a tool that has been used by scholars like Jewitt (2012) for 'video elicitations'. Robson says that these 'may be valuable in affording young children opportunities to talk about how they learn and how they reflect on their thinking' (2016, p 4). While I have not reported the reflections of the children in this thesis to avoid repetition of data, their reflection on their own artwork supported Robson's claim. In the first of the pictures below, according to Naima's recorded verbal description and reflection, she drew the lion from the book. This lion, drawn facing the viewer, is described as angry with large eyes and two sharp canine teeth visible suggesting anger and fierceness. His eyes are looking to the left, fixed at something beyond the edge of the page. Then Naima produced the second picture – this one was Little Mouse who is shown in a scenic outdoor location. The sun is shining, the sky is blue, the glass is green and the mouse is doing what he likes best – painting.

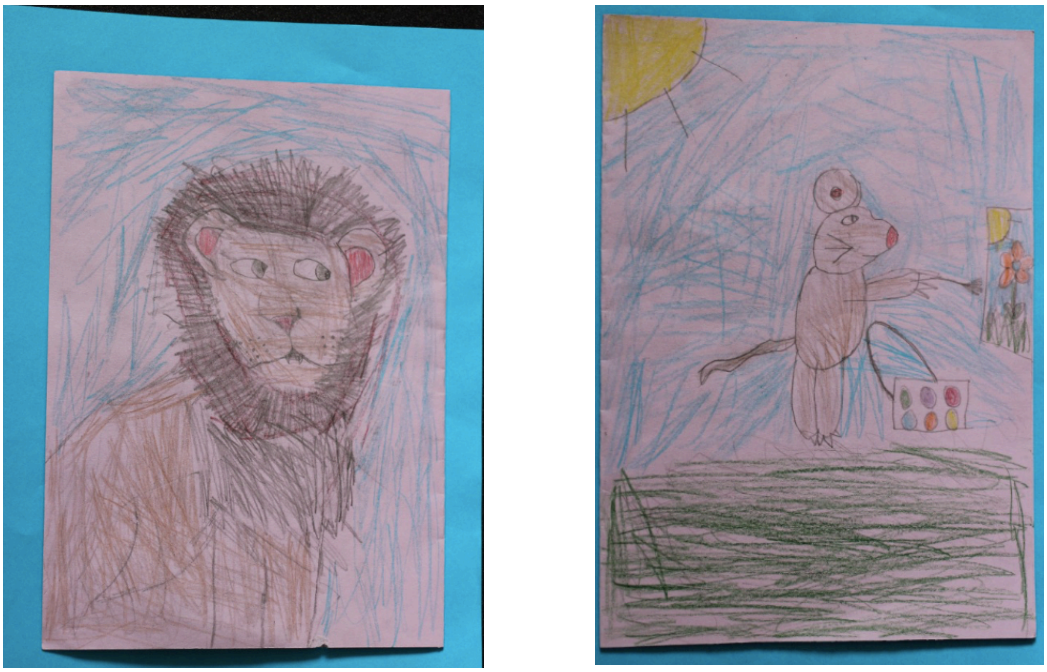

Figure7. 2 Resistance through artistic response: Naima's art

When asked to describe this scene, Naima said that the mouse is happy. She said, in Urdu, that he has 'no tension in life' ('tension' is a South Asian shorthand for worry or stress). She further explained that he is not worried that someone will eat him, and that he is enjoying creating the painting of flowers. Naima uses her knowledge about the character and places it in a situation that is not a part of the text world. The scenic location is something that Naima has imagined and it improves the mouse's fearful existence by changing it to a happy and peaceful life. In a further clarification, she placed the two pictures side by side, as placed above, and said that the Lion is even angrier because he is looking at the mouse enjoying himself. This shows a sophisticated response that is alert to

the dynamics between the characters, as well as revealing the reader's individual impression of the character's state of mind. Naima is not just observing and noticing; she is internalising and finding ways to respond to the situation and subvert it, all at the same time.

Naima's artistic response is a sign of her resisting the narrative of the scared mouse who has to run from his predators at every scene. She resisted the inherent unfairness in the story as well as the unequal power equations and through her art tried to redress the situation in favour of the mouse (just as the mouse does himself). This is empathy in action as well as a sort of activism. In the other situations, the children's verbal response showed that they understand the characters and their states of mind, but this example goes further in showing how a young participant understands, internalised and then responds expressively through art to present her point of view.

7.1.10 Language moments – wordplay delights

The children's language skills were challenged in a number of ways by the verbal text presented in this picturebook. While some sentences use literary devices like alliteration and assonance, others use linguistic puns. The young readers noticed the fun element of expressions like 'crabs give me the creeps' and read these alliterative features with exaggerated pronunciation.

> ?: Hey look! **Crabs give me the creeps.**
>
> ?: **This crab was made to grab.** Here.
>
> All: **This crab was made to grab.** Crab and Grab.

(Second LC, all five participants, Phase III)

Yet both P1 and P2 children missed some of the puns, for example, when the P2 group was looking at the 'bear' spread in which the verbal text says 'bears are unbearable'.

> Soumi: What does it say over here?
>
> Najab: I think bears are …
>
> Soumi [Reading from the book]: '**I think bears are unbearable**'. What's the meaning of unbearable?
>
> Najab: Unstable? No one can control them?
>
> Soumi: Ok. [Goes on to explain the meaning of un/bearable]

Notably, this was in the first phase, when the children were at the start of their picturebook journeys. In the above extract Najab did not seem to notice the wordplay. Typically, his reactions and thoughtful responses have consistently been sophisticated and of a language level which has been higher than some of the other participants. In this case, however, neither he nor any of the other children seemed to comprehend the wit in this instance.

In another such moment, on the bear spread, we see the mouse trying out three different sized chairs belonging to the three bears. He finds one chair that is stuffed with 'luxury bear hair, which 'allows maximum lift off' and which allows the user to escape all worries with just one bounce. The accompanying visual shows the 'real' mouse bouncing off the page to escape the big bear. However, the children did not seem to notice the intertextual connection between the three bears, the story of Goldilocks, and the 'just right' chair. On the other hand, they *did* comment on the mouse's expressions and that he was frightened and trying to escaping the scary bears. As I have suggested earlier, perhaps due to the focus of the discussions and activities around the expressions and related emotions, the children were quick to notice these aspects of the text. However, other aspects did not get as much attention. It might also be possible that some of the language jokes were not easily accessible to these particular P1 and P2 children and needed further scaffolding and highlighting.

7.1.11 The final moment

'Problem-posers' and 'problem-solvers'

In this chapter, as well as the two previous chapters, we saw the children trying to unravel a number of knots posed by the text. They did this, singly and often collectively, by posing questions about the text. They also tried to answer the questions that arose over the course of the discussions. When using children's literature in classroom-based scenarios, children tend to take on the roles of problem-posers as well as problem-solvers (Short, 2011). In the many examples quoted here, my role was usually of the mediator where I tried to embed my questions in the children's discussions and helped them unravel the text further. There were, however, an equal number of instances where the children's responses sparked questions amongst themselves and they bounced their understanding off each other. Thus, as Arizpe et al say, the children pose as the 'inquirers' as well as the 'problem posers' in these discussions (2014, p192). They are seen to engage with the text on the many different

levels discussed here, acting as co-respondents as well as collaborators in the task of collective meaning making.

The following excerpt from the discussion around the final spread shows the children asking me questions as well as each other as they try and fathom the purpose of the fantastic beast in the climactic moment. The reaction to the last page was mostly of puzzlement and wonder. They were initially unable to understand that having stolen the scary features of all the dangerous beasts of the previous pages, the mouse creates a new awe-inspiring beast using all those fearsome features. In the transcript below, I refer to it as the 'collage beast'.

> Soumi: So where did this monster come from?
>
> Several voices: The 'mouse man'.
>
> Soumi: This is the mouse, but then he turns into a monster?
>
> All: Yeah
>
> Soumi: And look at this. What about this mouse? What is he feeling right now?
>
> All: He is scared of him. Mouse. Monster.
>
> Malina: This is the biggest mouse. He will eat him. Monster….
>
> Several voices: Oh yeah. He might.
>
> Soumi: Do you think these monsters are real? Do they…umm… exist?
>
> Several voices: No. Only these ones are real. And these ones are fake. [Going back and forth between the pages and pointing to the wild animals on the previous pages versus the 'collage beast' on the last page]
>
> Najab: This one is a real one. This is one is fake. [Wild animal is real, collage beast is fake]
>
> Soumi: Why do you think the mouse has made the fake monster?
>
> Naima: Yeah, why this monster?
>
> Javed: Because he wants to be scared. He always wants to be scared.
>
> Naima: But he is also a bit brave.
>
> (Second LC, all five participants, Phase III)

As discussed earlier, the act of the children folding together the flaps of paper is an act of collaborative theatre as well as collaborative meaning making. The children have to both

literally create the creature as well as create meaning of what the newly created creature was. Here we see the children display a high level metacognitive awareness while discussing the problem of the 'mouse man', the reason why the mouse created it and what it represented. They discuss which of the scary beasts are real and which is fake or made up. Also, they discuss qualities of the central character – Little Mouse – and ask if he is timid or scared. Javed thinks that the mouse enjoys being scared and hence he created the collage monster. However, Naima counters the assumption by saying that the mouse is also a 'bit brave'.

Resisting definite answers

The following extract is from the final phase of the study where the children were recounting some of the highlights of the picturebooks they had read in their Literature Circles. I started by summarising what they said about *Wolves* and *Again!*, before coming to the title in hand, *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beast*.

> Soumi: So you think, he is going to share a sandwich with the wolf and that's why he is going to be happy?
>
> Soumi: And in this one you are saying he is happy, and in that one the dragon is angry, yeah? And what about that one? The mouse one?
>
> Masood: Sad because of the beast. And he going to dead them. By painting them…
>
> Soumi: Masood, tell me more about making these pictures dead… So what is the mouse doing here? This is the lion right?
>
> Mohammed: He painted this. [Referring to the mouse]
>
> Soumi: When the mouse is painting all these things, what is he doing?
>
> M: Because he can save the mouse from the lion.
>
> ?: By taking away the roar and all.
>
> Soumi: Do you think this mouse is afraid of the lion? Or do you think he really is brave?
>
> M: Brave. A bit brave.
>
> (Second LC, all five participants, Phase III)

Here the children start by talking about the 'happy' rabbit (because he is sharing a sandwich with the wolf) and the 'angry' dragon (because his mum will not read him the

book) – before coming to explain the motivations of Little Mouse and his artwork. There are two strands of meanings here – first one refers to the big collage beast who is going to 'dead' all the beasts and help Little Mouse escape. The second strand of meaning refers to the mouse's bravery and the use he makes of his painting skills to help the little mouse escape from his pursuers.

It is evident here that the children are not quite sure of the exact answers and even after reading these picturebooks for a number of times, a 'definite' meaning tends to elude them. However, metafictive literature encourages multiple interpretations and ambiguity, which leads to scenarios where the readers are contesting the meaning in the text with their different interpretations. It would appear that collaborative meaning making does not always lead to a single resolution even after multiple readings of the same text. While other studies have shown that readers tend to resist multiple, contesting narratives (Anstey 2002), the readers in this case showed a tendency to question and resist an all-explaining narrative too, demonstrating this through their multiple and mixed-up interpretations.

7.3 Summary of relevant findings

This chapter underscores some of the themes that emerged in the earlier chapters. In this last section, I note the most prominent observations that emerged from the analysis of responses to the two books covered in this chapter.

A strong analytical stance

The children were successfully able to negotiate metafiction and distance themselves from the narrative on the spreads in the text as evident from their reading and discussion of the last book. They also focused more on the expressions of the characters without being prompted, something which might indicate that they are learning to assimilate the skills of observing emotion ekphrasis and connecting it with behaviour, emotions and mental states.

The children also demonstrated increased skills in assimilating the textual elements and utilising their newly acquired sense of interpreting complex visuals in a busy metafictive texts, such as multiple levels of narration and multiple narrators. They showed signs of understanding the 'constructed-ness' of the book and a crucial 'meta' level awareness of the narrative and characters. As Nikolajeva notes, this awareness enhances the potential of 'learning from fiction about the actual world' (2014b p 31). The 'meta' level awareness extends to metacognition in the participants. According to Flavell, it refers to 'any

knowledge or cognitive activity that takes as its object, or regulates, any aspect of any cognitive activity' (2004, p. 275). The children showed awareness of their own feelings in their responses to the text, particularly the creative responses. As Papaleontiou–Louca says, metacognition refers to 'knowledge of one's own knowledge, processes, and cognitive and affective states' (2008, p 3). In this study, particularly with regards to affective states, the children showed awareness of not only the emotional states of the characters, but they were able to reflect on their own feelings when responding to the text.

Collaborative meaning making and individual resistance

From the intertextual instances and the response to the tactile features, we discover that children were posing problems about the text as well as solving them; in other words, they were acting as 'problem posers' and 'problem solvers.' The group of children also tried collaboratively to make sense of the narrative when it was not conducive to linear meaning making and fill gaps. Furthermore, their resistance to straightforward explanations is likely to increase their tolerance for uncertainty, which according to Meek (1988) is beneficial to readers. The children's resistance to some of the aspects of the text and its narrative is further evidence that on certain occasions they were not wholly convinced and found ways to express their resistance either through 'talking back' at the text during discussions or by metaphorically talking back through the means of artistic response.

Performative response, identification and distancing

Through several instances of performative responses, the children seem to be engaging their imagination to understand the minds of the characters and inhabit the secondary text world. These performances, which extend the narrative in many ways, provide a glimpse of the children's engagement with the text world. The children feel for the characters and identify with their states of mind. This indicates that they are exercising their Theory of Mind and expanding their emotional literacy skills.

I have discussed in my literature review the two types of identification that Nikolajeva (2014) puts forward i.e., empathic and immersive. While both are necessary, empathic identification needs a certain distance so that the reader is not wholly absorbed in the narrative or affected by it, leading to the loss of their own values and judgements. The role of metafiction, then, is also essential in creating that narrative distance between the text and the reader, which allows the reader to retain their critical assessment. Thus, the reader remains capable of choosing what to react to and what to treat as narrative excess. This

was demonstrated by the participants through the metacognitive awareness of their own emotions as well as 'reading' the narrative critically and noticing, for instance, where the mouse is really scared and where it is pretending to be scared but actually acting as a decoy; distinguishing which mouse is 'real' and which is only painted on, etc. This metacognitive, critical distance from the story embedded in the text afforded empathic identification with the characters. The participants demonstrated learning skills that made them accomplished readers of complex texts.

This finding is hugely pertinent to my project, which attempts to link the benefits of multiliteracies and multimodality, especially metafiction, with the capacity to develop more sophisticated Theory of Mind in young readers through the medium of picturebooks. The next chapter discusses these findings and weighs them up in relation to the initial aims of this enquiry.

Chapter 8 Children negotiating metafiction: A training field for multiliteracies

'If fiction is to serve as a training field for the social brain, fiction should logically offer challenge, not comfort.' (Nikolajeva 2014b, p 87).

In the course of the fieldwork linked to this inquiry, children were introduced to metafictive picturebooks and they responded to metafictive elements in a variety of expected, unexpected and complex ways. An overview of their responses has been presented in the previous three chapters. Since this inquiry has involved several disciplines – multimodal picturebook studies, cognitive literary theory and bilinguality in children – which have overlapped in predictable and at times unpredictable ways, I found myself trying to braid together multiple strands of ideas and understandings. In this chapter, I revisit the observations from the journey of fieldwork and the emerging themes and ideas therein, while trying to knit the strands in intertwining and interlinking patterns. I reflect on my initial research position, and assess how the analysis of the data has impacted my earlier perceptions of the project. I begin by summarising my motivations and return to some of the findings in order to form a deeper understanding of the processes involved.

I started my project with the hypothesis that reading complex, metafictive picturebooks would enhance the participants' multiliteracies – visual, verbal and emotional literacy skills as they made sense of the devices used in the texts, engaged deeply with the literature and identified with the characters. The two most important challenges, then, were first, gathering evidence that the children were 'getting' the metafictive devices and second, understanding the ways in which they *were* able to identify with the characters. The fieldwork was designed with these objectives in mind and included methods rooted in Reader Response and Transaction theory. In order to examine children's responses in more depth, I looked to cognitive literary criticism. This particular combination afforded me the lens with which to analyse the findings.

To get a holistic sense, I found it helpful to view the study with a 'meta-awareness' while taking a step back from the hugely engrossing process of analysis. I did several iterative readings (Arizpe et al. 2014) of the findings from the data set, my reflective journal and observation notes to strengthen this 'meta-awareness'. This helped me focus on the most important assumptions I started the study with and what I have learnt about each of those

assumptions. Along the process of doing the iterative readings and analysis, I also realised that the readings and the findings were based on my own schema of picturebooks as an informed consumer, and from co-reading with young children, including reading with my daughter. My schemas and expectations around the project have helped me see the patterns in the data, and it is important to acknowledge that another researcher running a similar project might find different links within the data leading to alternative findings. I have made this clear in earlier references to my research hypothesis in the first chapter as well as my researcher positionality in Chapter Four. Despite this I believe that the methods adopted in the study as well as the findings of this research are important and point towards valuable pedagogical considerations.

Continuing the themes of the moments of intensity as well as my 'meta-awareness' of the whole project, in this chapter I return to certain 'scenes' that stand out as singular moments of learning for myself as a researcher as well as for the project as a whole. I have attempted to organise these moments of learning based around the distinct strands of metafiction, bilingualism and emotional literacy. These strands overlap and interweave at different points, and I have synthesised these over the next few sections into a pattern of understandings and assertions making connections to how they might be extended for future scholarship.

8.1 Metafiction, affordances and learnings

This section focuses on the learnings derived from the metafictive features of the books. One of the larger aims of this study was to gauge children's engagement with literature. The findings provide evidence of how deeply the children engaged with the texts despite the challenges posed by the metafictive nature of the content. As mentioned in chapter two, a growing body of research on children's engagement with picturebooks has shown that even very young children are capable of surprising researchers with the level of their response (Arizpe et al. 2014; Arizpe & Styles 2016; Bland 2013; Graham 1998; Sipe 2002, 2008). The responses of the children who participated in the study supported the findings of earlier research in terms of displaying familiarity and awareness of picturebook conventions; relying on previous visual reading experience and a combination of intertextual and world knowledge (Bosch & Duran 2009); looking for clues to make meaning collaboratively (Maine, 2015); and negotiating the multiple levels of narrative that are a key feature of the selected metafictive texts.

As Nikolajeva (2014) suggests in the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, challenging literature has greater affordances which offer opportunities for learning. Within the realm of cognitive studies, Nikolajeva has proposed that books are training grounds in terms of developing young reader's ToM. However, in the course of presenting my findings in the earlier chapters, it became clear that these complex picturebooks were useful for a range of competencies alongside emotional literacy. This section teases apart the many affordances provided by the particular nature of the selected books. With each affordance, there emerges a natural link to a 'learning' from the project, drawing organically on the intricate strands of previous scholarship. The affordances are listed according to the order in which they were observed, from the simpler, physical features of the books to the more complex ones, which required intense engagement and afforded deeper learnings.

1. Gathering information from the visual text
2. Gathering information from the verbal text
3. Text/image interaction
4. Materiality and tactility
5. Challenges and disruptions to the linear text
6. Intertextuality
7. Indeterminate stories and endings
8. 'Unsettling' narratives that 'jar' the reader's expectations (Sipe & McGuire 2008, p 283)
9. The notion of surprise
10. Unreliable narrator and narratives
11. Multiple endings that allow narratives to be extended

Affordance 1. Gathering information from the visual text

Learning 1: The participants learned to investigate the text for visual clues.

During the Literature Circle, the participants had to move back and forth between the pages, looking for clues and cues in the visuals in order to make full meaning from the context. This is an extension of the phenomenon that Sipe refers to as 'transmediation' (Sipe 1998) where children search between the words and the images and fill in the gaps. However, when dealing with the selected texts which use multilevel narration and lack sequential images, looking closely for clues within just the images becomes a necessary instrument for fuller meaning making. For instance, in *Again!*, when Cedric insists his

mother read him the book a second time, he is shown pulling the end of a long dragon tail and winking, his face half turned towards the same side as the tail. The young readers had to look again and again to make meaning from Cedric's action, stance, gaze, smile, wink, his curled tail, and the colours used to depict him. With every 're-viewing', they gathered additional information about Cedric's interiority (Sipe 1998, p 106). In addition, they were anticipating how his mother might react to getting her tail pulled, knowing from previous spreads that she was tired and sleepy. It was observed that the children learned and developed this competency to gauge and predict a character's feelings and reaction, over time, with practice and multiple readings. From a cognitive perspective, we know that 'brain regions involved in motor functions are active when a person views another person execute an action' (Rizzolatti & Craighero 2004; Speer et al. 2009). These regions have mirroring neurons that assist readers to identify with the characters. The fourth section of this chapter discusses emotional literacy for a deeper link with the process of identification.

Affordance 2. Gathering information from the verbal text

Learning 2: Children learned to pay attention to the words and realised that not all words are equally important.

Some of the spreads in the picturebooks had language that was challenging for the children. In Radical Change Theory, Dresang discusses 'interactivity', which refers to 'dynamic, user-initiated, nonlinear, and non-sequential' features. Negotiating these features helps readers, especially children, to be more prepared for the disjointed nature of digital texts where there is usually no set starting or end point (Dresang 2008, p 40). The children interacted with the language in these non-sequential features. They went back and forth between visuals, fonts and the peritext on the pages, but eventually they learned it was not necessary to read all the little fragments of embedded text to glean the main narrative threads of meaning from the double spreads. For example, in *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*, there were a host of peritextual features especially on the 'bear spread' that the children tried to read with close attention, but they then realised that reading all the small print is not necessary to make overall meaning from the context. At certain points during the Literature Circles, the children were seen to be missing out on language tricks, puns, or long and complicated words. Over a period of time, they learned to be less concerned with cracking every little verbal code and to make meaning from other clues in the context.

Affordance 3. **Text/image interaction**

Learning 3: The participants learned that some aspects of meaning are better conveyed through verbal texts and others through images (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996) although both are necessary.

Being in a school setting which privileges textual literacy, the children initially gravitated towards the words and looked for ways to understand the meaning in the verbal text. With the words and the images being counterpointed in complex ways (Hunt 2006), the children's attention was pulled towards the images and they acquired skills to decode meaning from the images as mentioned in the affordance above. These images and the words, indeed the entire text, invite and challenge the readers to interact with an increasingly complex catalogue of 'codes, conventions assumptions and interpretive strategies' (Nodelman 1988, p 35). In a combination of learnings one and two, the children learned to notice the image-word synergy and 'transmediation' as explained earlier (Sipe 1998) and that they had to make meaning within the 'digressions, gaps and disruptions' (Pantaleo 2004, p 182) in the text.

Affordance 4: Materiality and tactility

Learning 4: Children learned to make embodied responses to the text, including haptic and performative engagement.

The selected texts in this study were shown to have pushed the boundaries of the readers' understanding by challenging them to use all the resources of words, images, posture, expressions as well as sounds, space and performance. The materiality of the text, which includes its shape and the physical presence as an artefact, is foregrounded in the selected texts, notably in the final spread of *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*. This feature engaged the readers' sense of touch and invited haptic engagement. Kress argues that 'forms of imagination are inseparable from the material characteristics of modes' (Kress 2003, p 171). Among the benefits of haptic engagement, Hateley (2013) mentions the development of hand-eye co-ordination and the kindling of an embodied imagination. At various points, discussed in the preceding chapters, the children performed spontaneous embodied reactions to the text, through their shouts, growls, stomps and carefully considered visual and dramatised responses. For example, they acted like the scared mouse and drew scenes depicting the mouse's life *after* the actual story ends. These multimodal

responses brought the texts to life, challenging the readers to engage with the texts with all their resources and capacities.

In *Literacy and the New Media*, Kress predicted that while language-as-speech would be the major mode of communication, 'language-as-writing will increasingly be displaced by image in many domains of public communication' (Kress 2003, p 1). Reflecting through their semiotic approach to include analysis of the selected picturebooks, the children used all the available resources including the verbal and written text, still and moving images, sounds, gestures and space in their performative responses, all of which worked 'in concert' with each other to produce the whole meaning (Rowsell and Burke 2009). Thus, these multimodal metafictive texts with their multiple affordances created spaces for a wide range of literacies.

Affordance 5. Challenges and disruptions to the linear text

Learning 5: The readers learned that disruptions were part of the loosely ordered design and that they have to negotiate their own arc of reading.

Readers, even at the emergent stages, learn to read according to certain conventions. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) argue that all reading of visual communication is coded. In some cases, we already know the codes of a certain culture and are therefore more successful at interpreting its signs and symbols. Even in the earliest stages of the fieldwork, the young readers were familiar with directionality in reading in that they knew that the narrative (the visual and verbal, both) starts from the left and moves to the right. To return to cognitive literary theorists mentioned in the first section of Chapter Two, scholars such as Miall (1995) have investigated how anticipation works during reading, particularly focussing on how readers sense a direction of the narrative so that they can predict 'possible future meanings' (Miall 1995, p 277). These possible future meanings aim for the simplest routes to resolution. However, these texts with the fragmented and layered narrative challenge the traditional linear reading path. The young children, in their attempts to find linear reading paths, found that the pictures in the double spreads were not sequential. With the words on the page conveying only part of the story, they had to rely more on the visual modes which in turn meant 'working with more open, less easily identifiable reading paths' (Hall 2008, p 144). The children, then, learned that these interruptions and diversions in the reading path were part of the story.

Affordance 6. Intertextuality

Learning 6: The participants demonstrated that they could utilise previous reading/knowledge to understand and interpret metafictive levels.

During the study, children were seen to use assimilated information from previous sessions and stories to make sense of new texts presented to them. They also made intertextual links to texts beyond the study, such as fairy tales or stories of fantastic beasts. Arizpe et al (2014) have defined intertextual responses as 'responses that refer to either other media or relate aspects of the imaginary worlds portrayed in the images to cultural references' (p 93). Through these text-to-text and life-to-text references, children start to extend and exist in the make-belief text world, making associative, analytical and synthesising links (Sipe 2008). As several instances in chapters Six and Seven have shown us, the children remembered the experience of decoding a narrative device from one picturebook and used it to interpret a similar feature in the next picturebook. Analysing these instances where the children were seen drawing parallels with other texts, we were able to conclude that each experience of reading these texts changed and adapted the picturebook schemas held by the children. These intertextual links made by the children helped them engage deeply with the texts as well as form a strong awareness of the text world.

Affordance 7: Indeterminate stories and endings.

Learning 7: Children showed that they could successfully tolerate and navigate uncertainty and disruption.

With each book exploration, the young readers were seen to travel 'increasingly unstable narrative territory' (Wolpert & Styles 2016). To make sense of loosely ordered narratives and indeterminate endings, children relied on previous knowledge and schemas to predict and anticipate twists and turns. As we have seen in the previous three chapters, the children often predict and anticipate wrongly. I have referred before to Fish's theory of Affective Stylistics, which posits that 'the temporary adoption of inappropriate strategies' is part of a successful reading experience where the author uses syntactical devices to mislead deliberately (Fish 1980, p 47). Fish refers to the 'deep structures' of embedded meaning versus the surface linguistic devices - and that it is often the misleading clues in the 'surface structures' that usually lead to 'mistakes' in prediction and comprehension (*ibid.*). As the surface structures unfolds through the act of reading, the reader predicts and anticipates the narrative and simultaneously checks the deep meanings against their own

projections. The resulting instability and unfamiliarity produces an effect of 'defamilarisation' (Stockwell 2002, p.79). This allows the existing cognitive schemas to 'fluidly' reorder themselves, (Jones & Spiro 1994) so that the readers are able to extend their acceptance to hitherto unknown and unacceptable notions in the narrative. When Meek (1988) suggested that it would benefit readers to 'tolerate uncertainty' long before these complex books came into existence, perhaps she meant that it was for the greater good of readers, as well as the society at large, to accept and understand difference and appreciate other perspectives.

Affordance 8: 'Unsettling' narratives that 'jar' the reader's expectations (Sipe & McGuire 2008, p 283).

Learning 8. Children learned that spaces of tension and resistance are part of the reading process.

Readers have expectations about plot, narrative, characterisation or even what a 'real' or a 'normal' book is. Wolpert and Styles note that 'very young readers are able to interpret the space between the stories and their narrators, enjoying the subversion of expectations and boundaries' (2016, p 102). This was evident in the children's reaction to the spread in *Again!* where the princess is shown kissing the dragon, her supposed wicked captor. The children's initial disbelief turned to laughter at the possibility of romance between an unlikely and improbable pair. The foiled expectations made them change and adapt their schemas and match them with other set patterns of behaviour in a criss-crossing of schemas, supported by the Cognitive Flexibility Theory as mentioned earlier in Chapter Two and again exemplified in Chapter Six (Jones & Spiro 1994; Sipe 2008). These spaces of tension and resistance foster critical thinking and emotional distance as will be discussed in further detail in the section on emotional literacy later in this chapter.

Affordance 9: The notion of surprise

Learning 9: The participants demonstrated the ability to negotiate surprise and developed an expanded view of books and narratives.

Dresang's Radical Change theory (2008) proposes ways to address the digital characteristics prevalent in today's modes of communication whether, they are online and hypertext, or paper books. The texts selected here, despite being paper books, have a number of Radical Change features that afford indeterminacy and a challenge to existing schemas. These surprising and disruptive capabilities of paper books increase the narrative

repertoire (Serafini 2015) of readers. Familiarity with these texts normalises different kinds of 'surprise', making them easier for readers to negotiate. Therefore, with ever changing and expanding notions of what books can *do*, readers become more demanding and discerning. In a relevant example from *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*, the children asked if the mouse would fall out of the holes in the book, much like the dragon and the princess who falls out of the pages of the book when Cedric burns a hole in the pages in *Again!*. We see the children get surprised by the unusual tactile feature, yet, they negotiate it by exploring the possibilities from the feature, often using their 'training' to notice things and giving a freer rein to their imagination.

Affordance 10. Unreliable narrators and narratives

Learning 10: Readers show evidence of challenging the authority and immutability of the written word.

Texts that challenge the prevailing authority of the author and the narrator, that invite interaction and include changeable endings, demonstrate that it is possible for the reader to be in charge. Semiotically, the reader is in charge of the dialogic meaning-making process. In the examples shared in the preceding chapters, the children were seen questioning each other while questioning the narrative. It was particularly evident in the discussions around *Wolves* when the children were faced with a choice of two endings. The participants showed awareness that the resolution of the story depended on their choice. This is one of the moments of intensity I analysed in Chapter Five. A situation like this is referred to as an 'event' in Hymes' (1972) model of speech acts which Maine uses to highlight moments where participants are aware of their own thinking processes (Maine 2015, p 94). This awareness is metacognition, 'a sophisticated critical-thinking skill' (ibid.) with the reader positioning themselves both within the reading process as well as reflecting on it by distancing themselves from the process. This is especially visible when children returned to points in earlier discussions and remembered their own versions (Flavell 2004; Papaleontiou–Louca 2008). This has been discussed by Bromley (2016/2003) who emphasises the 'value of revisitation for the purpose of developing metacognitive skills' (Bromley 2016, p 73). The children, while reflecting on their own role in taking the narrative forward, learn to not always trust the narrator and/or the author and to challenge the authority and immutability of the written word, i.e., the notion that once written, texts cannot be changed.

Affordance 11: Multiple endings can afford narratives to be extended.
Learning 11: Readers show signs of developing a sense of agency and choice.

Once the children realised that the text is indeterminate and unstable, they became conscious of their own agency as readers. Through repeated readings of the text, the children were to extend the narrative while simultaneously rejecting unappealing versions of the story. For example, in their visual responses to *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*, one participant showed Little Mouse painting in a happy and contented manner *after* the book's narrative had ended. Metafiction, by offering a sense of agency (Heath 2000), enhances literary and emotional interpretation. This sense of agency and ownership was strongly evident when the children shared the books with their respective classes, presenting their version of the story with confidence and conviction.

The list of affordances above shows us a range of learnings from this doctoral project with corresponding instances from the text. The list is progressive in its complexity in that it goes from the simpler acts of pointing and showing to noticing and observing; then it progresses to more internal, cognitive processes like reasoning, extending, resisting and reshaping of the narrative, with the final learning being that of the reader exercising their own agency and choice. It is important to note that not all the participants were able to explore each textual affordance and learn from it, as can be inferred from the findings discussed in the previous chapters. For teachers of reading, it would be important to make allowances for the different speeds and levels of each individual reader: some readers are likely to glean many complex inferences from looking and talking whereas others might explore more effectively through performance and drawing.

8.2 Strong affective engagement with the text and textual characters

The three preceding chapters show that the children were able to increase their ability to observe features related to the mental states of the characters through the scaffolded readings of each picturebook. As discussed in the affordances in the previous section, particularly the first three affordances, over time, the children learned to notice clues about expressions and possible related emotions without being prompted. They were able to point out and mark moments in the narratives where intense emotional activity takes place.

We have seen from excerpts from the Literature Circles that the children were involved in discussions around those moments regardless of their verbal ability in English or Urdu.

Earlier in the thesis, I addressed the question of reader engagement and how readers feel for the characters on the page (Chapter Two, first section). Nikolajeva's assertion that texts instruct their 'young readers to employ their empathy and theory of mind' (Nikolajeva 2014a, p 90) to understand both the character's emotions and their understanding of other characters' emotions (also known as higher-order mind-reading) held true for this study. The other question is how does an author create a believable young fictional character despite there being a big gap in the cognitive and affective skills between the author and the fictional character. In the Chapter Three, where I carry out a content analysis of the texts, I delve into this question and confirm that the devices of first person narration, multi-diegesis and linguistic foregrounding are some of the many devices used by authors to draw readers into a believable world of characters whom they can care for (Vermeule 2010) and 'optimize reader engagement' (Nikolajeva 2014b, p 4).

Through extending their Theory of Mind towards the characters, the children seem to be able to identify with the characters. According to Nikolajeva, the basic difference between an immersive reading of a text and an empathic reading is the use of one's own discretion, one's judgement and ultimately the moral affective system that governs our social interactions. Compared to immersive identification i.e., uncritically supporting the actions of the characters, empathic identification is an ideal form of engagement for the social and discerning brain. In this study the children demonstrated that they *learned* to read the emotion ekphrasis – involving verbal, gestural, special and auditory modes – of the characters. They started showing signs of metacognition, in that they noticed the ekphrasis and deliberately linked it with certain moods and emotions. The participants showed that they were able to examine the mental states of the characters and *link back* with their existing understanding of the expressions and what they thought those emotions represented in real life – the children immersed themselves in the narrative and engaged in active *thinking* about what it felt to be a cranky child having a tantrum (like Cedric in *Again!*) and responded to the narrative by shouting and stomping around the room and could 'pretend' to be badly-behaved with (alarming!) ease.

They also attempted to *imagine* about how it would feel to be a mother who had to deal with the tantrums of a child when she herself was tired and sleepy. As we have discussed earlier, having an engaged imagination is an important component for an active Theory of

Mind. It can be therefore said that they could also empathise with the mother dragon. Through their responses, they showed that they used their moral sensibilities to frown (metaphorically as well as literally) at Cedric's behaviour and *feel* for the exhausted mother. They also extended this 'considerate feeling' towards inanimate objects like the books that were shown to be badly treated by the wolf who rips Rabbit's library book in *Wolves* and Cedric who burns a hole in his bedtime book to take out his frustration at not being read the book out loud. Finally, the children *demonstrated* their engagement with the texts and their identification with the characters through visual and performative responses. They not only replicated the characters' actions and expressions (stomping and shouting like Cedric), they extended the narrative acting the role 'in character' and imagined schema-changing alternate realities for the characters and narratives.

The participants, thus, engaged in a range of visual and performative responses, which provided strong evidence that at certain moments, the children were transported by the text and the narrative. They inhabited the text-worlds and envisaged possible futures and parallel realities for the characters. In summary, the children *learned* how to read multimodal emotion ekphrasis, *linked back* to their earlier concepts of emotions and related feelings, *thought* analytically about the characters and *demonstrated* their identification with them.

While it is true that the children demonstrated their affective engagement with the texts within the context of the Literature Circles, it is important to note that the notion of 'empathy' is a complex one. The word is used to mean feeling an emotion for someone or something – for instance feeling sorry for a friend who is sad. It is also used to imagine oneself in someone else's shoes and imagining how it would feel to experience the situation. However, this feeling, or this instance of imagination is not evident unless the person feeling it or imagining it shows or 'demonstrates' either through verbalised thought or action. Since mirrored emotions are not always verbalised, it is difficult to claim that empathy has been enhanced or has been learned by the participants. The notion of textual empathy also precludes any form of action. The readers are not expected to say 'a kind word' to the characters, (which is a possibility in real life, when encountering real world people). The instance where Naima drew Little Mouse happy and painting outdoors was a special instance of visual response, which showed empathic identification for the character of Little Mouse, and cannot be generalised as an outcome for the whole project. Therefore, there is a need for caution not to over claim a 'direct causal effect of transference of skills' (Heath & Wolf 2005, p 39) outside the specific context of the Literature Circle.

8.2.1 An embodied theory of reading

We know from previous studies that emotions and feelings are somatic in nature. As we have seen earlier (Chapter Two) scholars have explored how emotions relate to the somatic functions of the mind and the body. At the same time, brain neurologists such as Damasio (2003) do not entirely support the supposedly dichotomous mind and body relations and believe that cognition is embodied. To remind ourselves, according to Damasio, **Emotions** are movements, rooted in the body, which are unconscious neural patterns which come before any feeling (the word 'emotion' coming from the Latin *ex* – 'out of' and *motio* – 'movement', meaning originating from movements). **Feelings** on the other hand emerge from perceiving these neural patterns generated by the brain. From the discussion in section 8.2, we saw that the children *learned* how to read emotion ekphrasis, *linked back* to their earlier concepts of emotions and related feelings, *thought* analytically about the characters and *demonstrated* their identification with them. All the words are verbs that signify some kind of action of the body or the mind. And since the Cartesian split is a myth, the children's journey of emotional literacy and ways of reading has been embodied as well.

…and how it impacts reading directionality

When Nikolajeva uses the term emotion ekphrasis, she deliberately refers to the physical *outward* symptoms of a person's state of mind. However, ekphrasis happens *after* the unconscious neural processes have already taken place in the body. So, emotion ekphrasis is more akin to feelings rather than emotions. The emotion ekphrasis that Nikolajeva talks about occurs after the body has perceived and processed the emotions and is expressing it outwardly. To link this to interpretation of the character's state of mind, readers have to look at *outward* symptoms and then work their way backwards inside the minds of the readers, in a reverse process of reading. This is an added level of complexity. In traditional western forms of reading, the reader reads from left to right, from the verso to the recto of double spread and from the left cover (which is on top) to the right cover page (bottom). In metafictive texts which demonstrate Radical Change and postmodern features, the narrative moves in and out of multiple levels of diegesis (as explained in Chapter Seven) that makes the flow of reading and meaning-making slow and complex. Trying to understand the outwardly symptoms of a character's emotion ekphrasis by going back inside their mind where the emotion is first generated, adds yet another level of motion or

movement in the reading of the text. There is a constant forward/backward, side-to-side, upward downward set of movements, which is essential in order to make sense of the intentions and the inner motivations of the characters. This is a complex process that demands multiple competencies. It, thus, needs to be slowed down and attention must be paid to the complexities of the books and the multiple ways in which children can respond for them to gain the most from the reading experience.

8.2.2 Emotions and the metafictive challenge

In the first section of this chapter, I have explored the different affordances that metafiction brings to children readers. In this section I link the metafictive nature of the texts with the opportunities of affective engagement afforded by the project.

Metafiction is a subversive literary genre that disrupts many notions about art and the imagination, jolting the onlooker into a state of high emotional alertness. Some scholars say that images 'tend to have a greater degree of specificity: the detailed look of a character can be depicted in a condensed manner that leaves almost no space of ambiguity' thus not leaving much for imagination (Bellorin & Silva-Diaz 2013, p 126). Written words, on the other hand, make greater demands on the reader's imagination. According to Bellorin & Silva Diaz (2013), verbal language is an ideal means to express 'perception through verbs like 'listen,' 'see,' 'smell,' emotional processes (desire, fear, hate), and cognitive processes (believing, knowing, thinking)', something that visual language is less adept at doing. This, however, is not entirely true for picturebooks as the authors go on to qualify further. The 'high degree of tension' between the images and verbal text (Mitchell 2000), which, more often than not does not follow the set conventions of other multimodal texts like comics and graphic novels, makes the division of labour between the words and images unequal, forcing readers to look deeper into the images. Metafictive picturebooks with their even more unpredictable, schema-disrupting visuals and narratives compared to traditional picturebooks, make the word-image relationship even more flexible and experimental (Mitchell 2000). Here, the images are usually not specific and meaning is hardly ever 'condensed' and there is always 'space for ambiguity'. In such a context, looking for meaning and understanding the characters' inner landscape of feelings and emotions requires a high degree of engagement with the text.

What I had hoped for was that the children's responses and their engagement with the texts and the methods would reveal something of their inner thinking processes. The verbal

response were not wholly revealing. With the 'meta' awareness of the flow of whole project that I mentioned at the start of this chapter, I see this as a mirroring of the metafictive texts themselves. In the way the words of the picturebooks do not carry the entire meaning by themselves, likewise the children's responses, despite the dialogic complexities of response and interpretation (Barnes & Todd 1995; Maine 2015), remained incomplete when viewed just on their own. The children's responses that were in addition to the words and the conversation turns – their facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and exclamations, their performances of scenes from the picturebooks as well as their art work – complemented and enhanced their verbal responses.

In this inquiry with metafictive texts, the performative and visual responses were the strongest indicators of the children's inner thoughts. Just as drawing is thinking, performance is also thinking and manifesting those thoughts in an embodied manner. Danko-McGhee and Slutsky (2007) assert that early meaningful art experiences can have an inspirational influence on literacy development. They also say that when readers talk about and discuss their artistic creations, it enhances both their written and oral language (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2007). This is true of both monolingual and bilingual children. Heath and Wolf argue that talking about art is a higher brain function that influences both our own emotions as well as how we understand others (Heath 2000; Heath & Wolf 2012). The annotations in the form of thought bubbles showed the children's understanding of the character's state of mind. In certain situations, the children were able to extend the narrative such as in Naima's drawing of the Little Mouse painting in the open. In section 7.1.8, I discuss how the children seemed to understand the lion's interiority by miming the actions of the lion as well as its roar. Furthermore, they also replicated how the rhino behaves when he is angry. In an instance of immersive identification, some of the children got a bit wild and unruly, stomping around the room and walking over furniture. This, as previously explained, is an example of Sipe's 'transparent' category where the real life experience and the story world identification both 'become superimposed – one transparent over the other' (Sipe 2002, p 477). Extending further into the visual/cognitive rubric devised for this study based on Sipe's categories and the analysis framework developed by Arizpe et al (2014), these responses can be categorised as immersive 'referential' responses, demonstrating interpretation of the elements of the narrative, as well as 'personal' responses, linking real life and aspects of the text. Above all, these responses are most obviously categorised as 'performative' with the text acting as a springboard for creative responses.

Resistance – distancing through visual responses and performative responses

The visual responses also allowed the children to escape into their own world – **distancing** themselves from the narrative. The participants used their existing schemas to give alternate realities to the characters, while resisting the current narrative. Naima's artistic response, showing the lion staring angrily at the mouse who is shown happily painting unaware of the lion's gaze, is a sign of her resisting the narrative of the scared mouse who has to run from his predators at every scene. As discussed earlier in Chapter Seven, Naima voices her sense of fairness gathered from her own experiences (Comber 2001) by resisting unfair power equations through her art. This is empathy in action as well as a sort of activism. In the other situations, the children's verbal response showed that they understand the characters and their states of mind, but this example goes further in showing how a young participant understands, internalises and then responds expressively through art to present her point of view.

In the previous chapter, I refer to Sipe's notion of 'talking back' (Sipe, 2002, p. 477), which involves dramatizing or acting out the text and projecting one's voice to convey the emotions of the characters. The children's interjections and exclamations were examples of 'talking back' – a type of response that emerges when readers become so deeply engaged in a story that it blends and blurs with their own lives, causing them to comment on details of the character or plot, sometimes in character, from deep within the fictional realms of this secondary world (2002, p. 477). When children react to the texts at this level of deep reading that leads to this phenomenon of 'talking back', they are wholly immersed in the narrative. However, Sipe's typology of young readers' expressive response was not in relation to metafictive texts, as Farrar notes in her thesis (Farrar 2017, p 138). Therefore it bears reminding ourselves that some of these responses might not fit entirely with Sipe's description of the categories.

Distancing can help in avoiding immersive identification

Metafiction, through its multilevel narratives and multiple endings, offers a sense of agency to the readers (Brice Heath 2016). Readers can distance themselves from the narratives and choose what to believe. Emotions can be selected and examined, enhancing literary and emotional interpretation, which then paves the way for empathic identification.

While on some occasions the children were engaged in talking back and getting entirely absorbed in the narrative and the character's intentions, there were other occasions where the children were able to display some restraint too. In a curious paradox, talking back to a metafictive device is an act of distancing oneself text rather than getting immersed in the text, as identification suggests. Metafiction, from what we have discovered so far from other scholars, is a device that creates critical distance. This happens when elements of the text foils or fails to meet the readers' expectations. In the previous chapter, I contend that reading the picturebooks developed a questioning attitude in the children where, at some points, they were seen to not wholly believe the narrative, the story, the characters or the author even. This engendered a 'meta' level awareness, which reminds the children of the 'constructed-ness' of the book, an artefact which was not to be wholly relied on. As Nikolajeva reminds us, 'to be a successful mind-reader, you need to be detached from the mind you are reading' (2014b p. 86).

In *the Big Book of Beasts*, Mouse's final act of defiance, when he transforms himself into a fearsome beast, could be viewed as an act of resistance. It foiled the expectations of the readers therefore creating critical distance. The act of putting together the beast by aligning the layers of paper flaps, getting it wrong, and again trying till they got it right underscored the constructedness of the book and the narrative, creating and strengthening that critical distance. Thus, I assert that metafiction seems to be the ideal vehicle for children to learn and practice emotional identification and literacy while simultaneously learning to question the narrative and distance oneself from the overwhelming emotions of the narrative.

8.3 Bilingual children

This section discusses the implications of the bilingual and bicultural status of the participant children and how they relate to metafiction as well as the affective engagement discussed in the previous two sections. Despite being conscious of the various deficit labels that are attributed to EAL learners (discussed in Chapter Two) I believe that the complex nature of these texts would pose a positive challenge for all children new to any language system, be it verbal or visual. The fact that these children come from different cultures and have access to other language systems in addition to English, only makes the context more complex and dynamic as seen in previous studies on multiculturalism and children's literature (Botelho & Rudman 2009; Short & Thomas 2011 etc.).

As delineated in the second chapter, the use of the term 'emergent language learners' in this study refers to the children's 'new user' status in communicating in the English

language. It relates to their 'New to English' or 'Early Acquisition' stages of English literacy as mentioned in Chapter Five. It also refers to their new status within the culture of primary school education. They also have an emergent status with respect to their bilingualism and biculturalism, having come from a non-native culture into a Scottish, Catholic primary school where English is the medium of education. Given the situation, I often asked myself this question while conducting the fieldwork – *did the emergent language skills and cultural differences pose a barrier to understanding the metafictive nature of the texts? Or perhaps did it have the opposite effect, i.e., enhancing their understanding? How did the use of the participants' mother tongues influence their understanding of their own bilingual identities?*

8.3.1 Culturally situated readership and identities

The design of the project invited children to respond to metafictive picturebooks. It also invited multilingual responses helped by the fact that I spoke the participants' mother tongues. This led to two lines of tension and contrasting strands of thoughts.

The first line of tension was created by the importance given to reading visual images over the words. The rules of the Literature Circle challenged the primacy accorded to the written language and traditional code-breaking and comprehension type literacy practices (Leland et al. 2005). This was emphasised by the fact that for some of the children, 'the differences between home and school [literacy] practices meant that, first, the visual was of less importance than the written word and second, that the text was not meant to be questioned or discussed' (Arizpe 2010, p 71). The children in the study initially gravitated toward the verbal text in the picturebooks. Their attempt at decoding the words met with limited success given their emergent learner status. At the start of the fieldwork, the younger P1 students were particularly frustrated by their inability to read the words. However, Hunt (2011) reminds us that a picturebook should be read at 'picture speed' rather than at the speed of reading words. This meant that this situation with the slower readers worked to the advantage of the aims and purposes of this inquiry. This links closely with the affordances listed in section 8.1, particularly the first three: Gathering information from the visuals, the words and the text/image interaction. Over time children started to look more closely, reading more analytically, transmediating and filling the gaps between visuals and words and making meaning from the various multimodal affordances of the books.

The second line of tension was caused by the use of Urdu within the school. Not only were responses in Urdu encouraged by myself, often leading by example, these responses were treated with the same degree of importance, seriousness and validity as responses in English. This was the first way in which the practices of the Literature Circle were subverting accepted notions about the supreme importance of English, thus opening up spaces of tension during reading the books. My observations in the preceding chapters have shown that the children were surprised, almost disconcerted, to be invited to speak in their mother tongues (Urdu in most cases) in school. They were notably hesitant to use Urdu in their responses. It was clear that, to them, school was a place for speaking in English. As I have reflected in the literature review, scholars like Cummins (1996) and Garcia, Kliefgen and Falchi (2008) have written about the deficit labels that learners of English have to overcome in regions and countries that are largely monolingual. The notion that identity is a key factor affecting learning (Siegler 2000) is a powerful theory examined by Cummins (1996) in relation to second language learners in North America, showing how 'schools affirm, ignore or devalue pupils' personal and cultural identities' (Coulthard 2003/2016, p 84). The deficit culture that surrounds second language learners was evident in the children's attitude to their own language competency as well. Reasonably competent children doubted their English speaking ability and exhibited a second language speaker syndrome in that they felt that they were not good enough or articulate enough. In an extension of this behaviour, those participants who were not confident speaking in English were considered to be 'silent' by their classmates.

Over time, as their confidence in their responses grew, and they became more comfortable around me, they were seen to translanguage more frequently, more fluidly and for more extended conversational turns (Blackledge & Creese 2015; Garcia & Wei 2014). The children became more confident in their Urdu responses in the later stages of the fieldwork. We saw in Chapter Six that Masood, who had very little confidence in English, used his mother tongue to engage at length and respond to a particular emotional moment of intensity. The use of mother tongue helped Masood express himself making him less conscious of both his stammer and his disadvantage as an English speaker. In his own way, Masood 'spoke back', thus subverting the notions of deficit towards children whose English competencies do not meet the prescribed school standards.

8.3.2 The metafictive challenge and bilingual readers

From the Vygotskian stance I had outlined earlier in Chapter Four, we know that all kinds of literacy practices are socially constructed. Be they visual, verbal, cultural or emotional, all literacies are influenced by the conventions of the social contexts they are located in. This study confirmed the notion of culturally situated readers, who demonstrated access to and use of language which they had acquired along their individual journeys, informed by 'the accidents of physical geography and temporality' (Arizpe 2017, p 127). Often children who learn English as a second language or as an additional language are seen to have internalised 'wider negative social messages' where knowledge of English is privileged over any other home language.

However, these embedded social notions are at significant odds to linguists and other social scientists who maintain that there are specific benefits to bilingualism. Bialystok (2001) and other scholars (Bialystok et al. 2012; MacNab 1979) assert that bilingualism influences creative thinking and flexibility of thought in a positive way. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, bilinguals have access to two linguistic systems and two names for any given object, which allows them the capacity to view things from different perspectives as well as switch between the two names /linguistic systems. Bilinguals are seen to perform better in tasks which need better executive control, meaning tasks including a range of cognitive processes like reasoning and problem solving (Kray & Lindenberger 2000). If we view reading metafictive texts as problem-solving challenges or systems of communication working in alternative ways, it might be said that the bilingual readers selected for this study might have been at an advantage. This points us towards the possibility that bilinguals might be more open to the metafictive challenge. The different names of the same emotions, and a different way of viewing the action on the page allows these learners to engage with the text as well as create a distance in an ideal form of empathic identification.

These children initially showed resistance to the innovative nature of these texts. This reaction is in alignment with previous studies which showed (older) children from other Non-Western/ non-English speaking cultures who were entirely unfamiliar with postmodernist texts showed resistance to accepting them as legitimate books or understanding them (Bromley 1996; Colledge 2005; Evans 2009 etc.). However, it is a testament to the power of slow and patient support given to the inexperienced young readers in this study as it helped them negotiate the journey from being novice readers to

experts of looking, seeing and observing, able to negotiate complex texts with confidence and sophistication.

8.3.3 Distancing through learning new words that represent familiar emotions

'For magic consists in this, the true naming of a thing.'

Ursula K Le Guin, in *A Wizard of Earthsea*

From an emotion and language perspective, this expansion of the vocabulary is important for the development of children's awareness around emotions. The act of *naming* an emotion as well as the process of *learning* a word that represents a particular emotion, helps in the *recognition* of the emotion. The act of learning the word in a different language gives the learners access to another reality. As Kramsch says, language is a symbolic system that constructs the very reality it refers to' (2009, p 2). She goes on to say that 'everyday world acquires a different meaning by being named differently' (ibid.). To return to Bialystok (2001), bilingual children exist on different planes and negotiate meaning differently. The self-reflexivity in the nature of learning words in another language gives bilingual learners an ability to distance themselves from the emotions and the context, as well as to critique.

During the fieldwork, children often used the Urdu word for the emotion they were examining in the text. To show that they understood what the emotion was, they could either act it out, or they could use synonyms of the emotion. Often they did not know a synonym in English and would use related word in Urdu. For instance, Naima wanted to demonstrate her understanding that Cedric was having a tantrum because he was frustrated and unable to read or get his way with his parent. Naima did not know the exact word for tantrum in Urdu, but she used the closest word she knew – '*gussa*' which translates to anger. Thus, Naima, through this act of translanguaging, showed that she is able to access her linguistic and cultural repertoires. In addition, for her own learning, she made connections between the fields of meanings between the two words – 'tantrum' and '*gussa*' – and realises that the meanings overlap at certain points. These two words and the emotion itself (with all its multimodal expression) inform each other in a three-way process of symbolic meaning making. Thus, echoing Kramsch, the word 'gussa' takes on a different meaning by being named differently in another language. We know that in the end, communication is about the semantics of what we uttered and what the listener

interpreted. Thus, the real meaning is what we, like T.S. Eliot's Prufrock, try in vain to clarify – 'That's not what I meant at all... that's not it at all' (Eliot 1915). The bigger our repertoire, the more capable we become as communicators.

8.3.4 Expanding vocabularies

To return to Grosjean (1997) and Hakuta (1990), bilinguals' access and use of two languages can be described as being on a continuum rather than the operation of a binary switch between the languages. Thus, the best performances are delivered by those who are known as balanced bilinguals. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, a 'balanced bilingual' is one who is approximately equally fluent in two languages (Baker 2011). In the realm of picturebook studies, there has been ample evidence to demonstrate how reading picturebooks have enhanced the vocabularies of young readers and aided language acquisition (Bland 2013, Mourão 2012 etc.), helping readers along their path to achieving balanced bilingualism. However, this study was different to other studies in that the language acquisition was not the prime focus of the intervention. The other significant difference worth noting here is that some of the children had very little written or spoken English when the project started. The activities, which have been reported earlier, did not have reading, writing or spelling as their aims. Despite the participants' emergent language skills, they were also able, to a certain extent, to negotiate the linguistic challenges presented by the texts such as puns, jokes, long words and complex phrases. As mentioned earlier, this study ascribes to the Vygotskian school of thought that language is acquired through social interaction. Through the environment created in the intervention and the activities of the Literature Circles, the children learned functional language which they started using in appropriate contexts.

Yet, despite the lack of focus on language acquisition, it was clear from some brainstorming activities that the children had shown improvement in their linguistic repertoires. The focus on emotions and expressions lead to the children expanding their relevant vocabularies. At the start of the project, I gave the children some expressions in the form of emoticon stickers attached to a sheet of card and the participants were tasked with listing words to describe the emotions. Since most of them were not confident at writing and spelling at the beginning, I noted their responses verbatim on the sheet. The photograph below is an example of the emotion brainstorm activity.

Figure 8. 1 Emotion brainstorm activity image 1. Primary Two, October 2014.

This activity was conducted in the first phase of the fieldwork in October 2014, with the group of five P2 children. Here the, children are seen to describe the central emoticon sticker as 'happy', 'delighted', 'excited' and 'love' (owing to the heart shaped eyes). The children's responses also included the circumstances in which someone might be 'really really, very very' happy, like 'getting a gift' or when they are 'having fun'.

A similar activity was carried out at the end of the longitudinal study in September 2015 where two smaller groups of the same children, who were by then in P3, were given four different emoticon stickers and were asked to list describing words. The two following photographs of the task show the children's responses in their own handwriting.

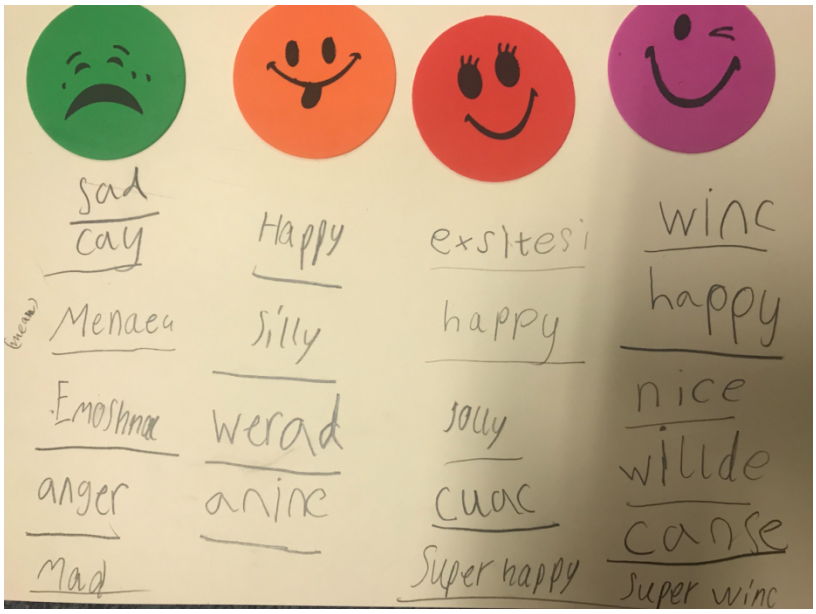

Figure 8. 2 Emotion brainstorm activity image 2. September 2015, Primary Three

Sad Cay (cry) Menaeu mean) Emoshnal (emotional) Anger mad	Happy Silly Werad (weird) Aninc (a wink?)	Exsitesi (excited) Happy Jolly Cuac (?) Super happy	Winc (wink) Happy Nice Willde (wild) Canse (?) Super winc

Table 8. 1 List of emotion vocabulary 1

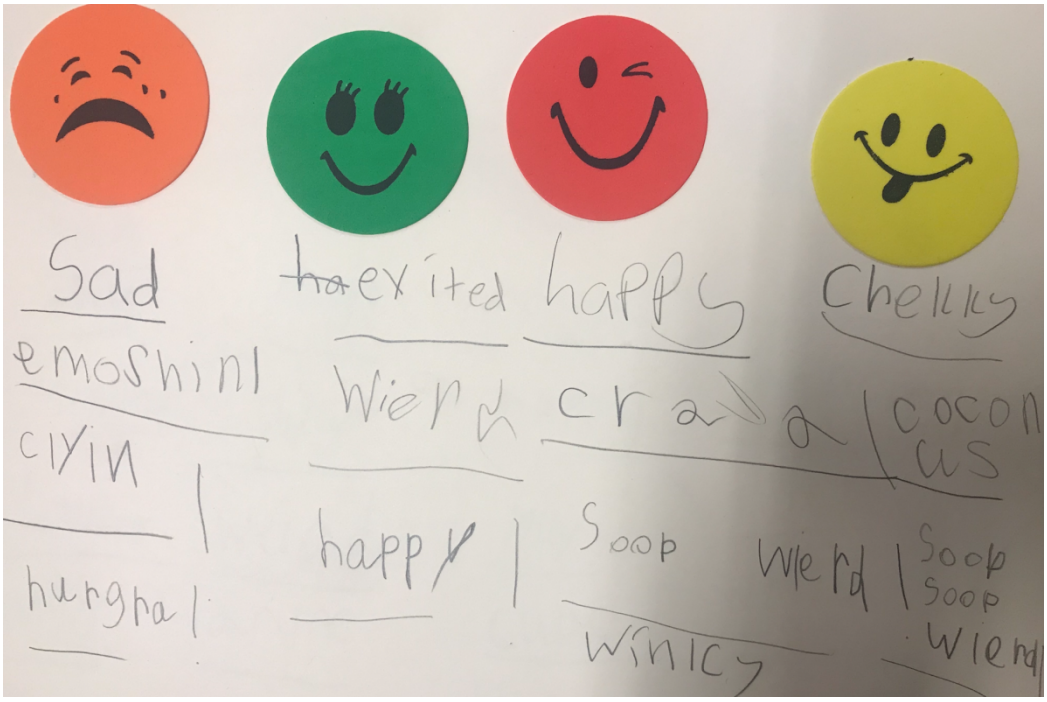

Figure 8. 3Emotion brainstorm activity image 3. September 2015, Primary Three

Sad Emoshinl (emotional) Ciyin (crying) Hungra (hungry)	Exited (excited) Wierd (weird) happy	Happy Cra..a (?) Soop (super) weird (weird) Winicy (winking)	Chekky (cheeky?) Coconus (coconuts?) Soop (super) soop (super) wierd (weird)

Table 8. 2 List of emotion vocabulary 2

For a similar 'happy' emoticon (the third sticker in image 2), the children have listed words like 'excited', 'happy', 'super happy', 'weird' and 'jolly'. When compared, 'weird' and 'jolly' are two new words that appear in the later activity. In addition, if we look at some of the other words in images 2 and 3, words like 'emotional', 'cheeky' and 'winking' also appear. These are words that did not feature in the children's discussions or transcripts from the first two phases. The difference is quite clear to see. The children's individual vocabularies have increased and so has their confidence at writing it themselves. It is important to mention here that the word 'wink' was the focal point of one of the discussions in the second phase of the fieldwork when the group was reading *Again!* (Refer to Chapter 6, section 6.6.2). The usage of 'wink' here demonstrates the acquisition of a new word as well as its recall and appropriate use, a way of increasing the participants' active vocabulary.

Recognising primary and secondary emotions and having the vocabulary for it

Psycholinguistic informs us that primary emotions that occur due to neural activity in certain parts of the brain are visible through the person's tone of voice, pitch, body posture, eyes, expressions, etc. When these are perceived by the brain for a certain period of time, (which varies according to the situation and the individual), they start to translate into feelings or 'moods.' As mentioned earlier, the children were able to decode these primary emotions and notice feelings like happiness, sadness, anger, fear or disgust.

On the other hand, secondary emotions are changes in the state of the body. These sometimes manifest as changes in a person's vital statistics like the heart racing, palms becoming sweaty, etc., sensations caused by some external stimulus or a memory. These secondary emotions give rise to more complex feelings than simple emotions like happiness or sadness. For example, a complex form of basic happiness would be excitement or ecstatic behaviour. A complex form of anger would be resentment or having a tantrum; fear could be expressed as feelings of horror, or being stunned or petrified. During the Literature Circles, the children often were able to respond to the more complex emotions and used words like bored, excited, thrilled, delighted, cheeky emotional etc., which are all complex feelings and usually cannot be explained or approximated without explaining the context first. These, contrary to what Bellorin and Silva-Diaz (2013) posit in their article, are certainly not easily delineated through words, neither are they easily demonstrated through images. They have to be part of a narrative and a context through which readers can interpret these complex emotions. The participants in this study were

seen to use the context, the narrative and the synergy of the images and verbal text to form different forms of identification with the characters.

Summary

This chapter brought together the important and intertwining strands of bilingual children and their affective engagement through the vehicle of the metafictive picturebooks. I started with analysing the findings, bringing together the affordances of metafiction and the learnings from it. Next, I discussed the impact that reading metafiction had on the awareness of emotions in the bilingual participants and how they demonstrated strong affective engagement with the text and the characters. The final section of this chapter discussed how bilingual children navigated the metafictive challenge and how it impacted the participants' understanding of emotions. I also referred to the way in which recognising emotions using both their mother tongue as well as English influenced the participants' affective engagement with the textual characters and narrative. The next chapter will return to the research questions and summarise the learnings and conclusions from this research enquiry.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

'In our times of increased migrations and displacements, when globalisation enhances what Pratt (1999) calls the 'contact zones' and the 'traffic in meaning' (2002) among individuals and communities, it is important we look in richer detail at the lived experience of the multiple language users.' (Kramsch, 2009, p. 2).

A holistic view

In this concluding chapter, as I braid the strands of interlinking thoughts, ideas and understandings, I try to take a step back from the minutiae of the data and reflect holistically on the stages of this research inquiry. It is perhaps relevant to reiterate here that all of the sense-making process is a reflection of my subjectivities and critical stances through which I have justified the roads taken and *not* taken as discussed earlier in Chapter Four. Another researcher might have chosen other roads.

In this chapter, I revisit the research question and the related aims, summarising the findings of the inquiry. I then consider the importance of the socialisation agenda of literature and how metafiction might transform ways of handling information and seeing the world. I conclude with pedagogical recommendations and ways forward for future research. I start, however, with reflections on the completion of the fieldwork, highlighting the journey of the participants, before returning to the discussion on moments of learning and the reflections of the class teachers.

9.1 Completing the fieldwork story

9.1.1 The children sharing the books with their classes

The final phase of the fieldwork showed that the participants formed strong connections with different aspects of the project, such as being part of a select group, the methods used and activities implemented, the excitement of participating in out-of-class sessions, and most importantly, the books themselves. The children wished to make a poster showcasing their project to the rest of the school serving as a reminder of their learnings. The following image is of the completed collage, designed by the children with some initial guidance from me. It brings together some of their favourite moments from the books, the language of emotions and highlights some of their sophisticated visual and verbal responses discussed in the earlier chapters. Making this poster was a collaborative act, in as much as most of the project was an act of collaborative and co-constructive meaning-making from

the chosen complex texts. The participants suggested that the book covers be pasted in a flap like manner to provide viewers with a flavour of the interactive elements of the books. As discussed earlier, the children learned artistic styles while replicating the metafictive features of the texts.

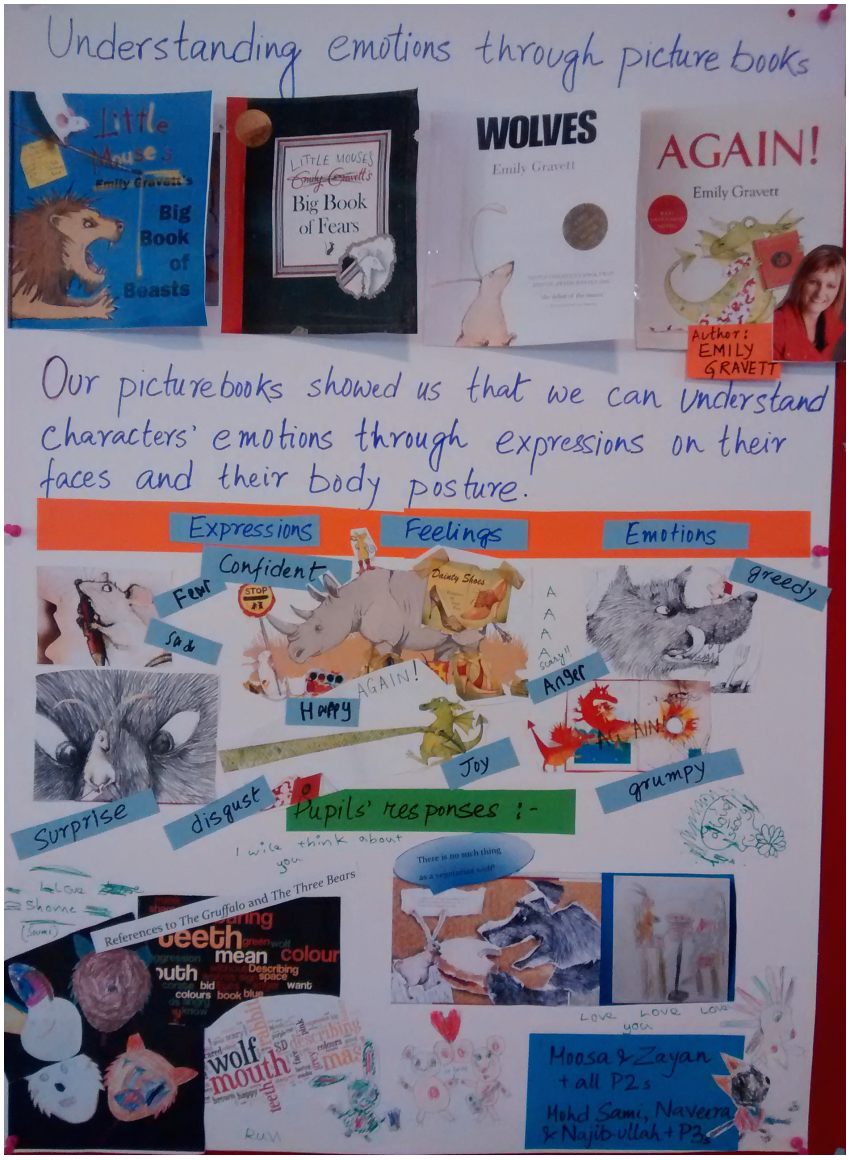

Figure 9. 1 The collage summarising project highlights

As mentioned in the overview of research methodology (Chapter Four), one of the final tasks of the project was the sharing by students of the books with the rest of their respective classes. By the third phase, the new school term for 2015/16 had started and the participants had moved up to Primary Two (P2) and Primary Three (P3) classes (from P1 and P2). Participants chose one book each to read to their respective new class. This activity was a way of reinforcing the skills the children had acquired over the duration of the project. The children were thrilled to be able to share their favourite stories, characters and moments from their chosen books. In effect, these were walkthroughs of the books led

by the participants individually, while their whole class and the class teacher participated in their activity. While doing this, they demonstrated a marked increase in self-confidence compared to the start of the project. In the multiple interactions they had had with the books, each child had created their own stories from each narrative. They shared these stories with an increasing sense of ownership, to the extent that when another classmate presented a different interpretation, they asserted their own version as the *real* version of the story. They showed signs of relying on the collaborative meanings made during the Literature Circle discussions and helped their classmates untangle the metafictive meanings using the clues gathered during the detailed explorations of the texts.

In the third phase, I also noticed some of the children being a little unengaged during the book explorations in the Literature Circles. Perhaps, while I as the researcher was still excited about the project and hoped for complete engagement from the children, the participants themselves were experiencing project fatigue, especially when we were looking at a book that we have explored earlier. This could also be viewed as the children 'talking back' to the project design itself where they expected a different book with no repetition of themes or characters (Sipe 2002, p 447). This is one of the forms of 'resistance' that Sipe (ibid) refers to, although in this instance it was not resistance to a particular books or activity but to the way the books and activities were chosen and the project was designed. As Arizpe and Styles (2016) note, after a point the children involved in reader response projects can begin to lose some of the interest in the project and some of their responses end up being somewhat perfunctory.

9.1.2 Reflections of the class teachers

The class teachers noticed the assured performance of each of the children when sharing their favourite books with the class. In the final brief interviews conducted with the teachers upon completion of the project, they mentioned the improvements they noticed in the participants' overall confidence in speaking and discussing different kinds of books in the classroom. The teachers linked this directly to the prolonged and focussed attention the children had received during the project. The confidence of the children to act as the mediators and interpreters of meaning stood out as one of the biggest gains of this intervention. The final interviews with the children corroborated the teachers' impressions. They were more expressive and articulate, as demonstrated by excerpts of their responses in the preceding chapters.

According to the teachers, the children showed an inclination to talk about the stories they were reading in class and were often able to make more connections between stories read in class and elsewhere. Usually, in the classroom, the children read graded readers that have straightforward storylines and simple visuals to support the reading, and at the end, they are expected to answer basic comprehension questions. The participants, with their experience of looking closely for clues, were able to answer the prescribed questions with relative ease and accuracy. I have discussed elsewhere the story of Masood, the quiet boy with a stammer, who spoke Urdu and Portuguese but almost no English. In Chapter Six, I shared the instance when Masood was moved by the narrative and spoke at length, with great feeling and very little hesitation about one of the spreads. His class teacher mentioned his improvement and was delighted with his levels of participation and confidence in class, which she attributed to this intervention.

One of the teachers mentioned that two of the children were very interested in drawing pictures of the stories they discussed in class, showing their literary engagement with the story via the visuals. Unsurprisingly, one of these was Naima who produced some of the best artistic responses during the fieldwork while the other was Javed. Both these children were proud of their art and shared it with their class teacher as well as their classmates who in turn started copying them and responding via pictures.

The final highlight from the teachers' interviews is the change they noticed in the children's vocabulary. Two of the teachers noticed some of the participants using meta-language related to books like fiction/non-fiction, cover page, title, publisher, author, illustrator etc. These terms were used regularly in the Literature Circles and it is likely the children retained these as a part of their active vocabulary, using them where appropriate.

While the project did not have provision for the teachers to note observations formally after the fieldwork was completed, these observations are extremely valuable, since these corroborate the findings of the overall project. These themes echo the reflections of other scholars and the discussions in the previous chapter.

9.2 Revisiting the research questions

I started this enquiry endlessly fascinated by metafictive picturebooks. At the same time, I was interested in investigating ways of learning with young children that would stimulate them and excite their curiosity while enhancing certain competencies I believed were crucial. I was eager to discover whether these picturebooks would be appropriate as a methodological tool and a vehicle of learning for young learners, who were 5-6 years old.

As a result, the study was initiated with the objective of investigating how children interact with the selected texts using their existing visual and emotional literacy competencies. Since the study involves bilingual and bicultural children, who are learning and negotiating two languages and cultures, the study also focuses on how they gain confidence in their cultural identities as well as identities as emergent EAL learners. To this purpose, the main research question was:

Main research objective

How, and to what extent, can metafictive picturebooks be used as visual, verbal and emotional literacy tools for emerging bilingual readers?

This guiding question braids together three large strands of thoughts comprising of metafictive picturebooks, bilinguality and multiliteracies. As explained earlier, this study situates itself in the multiple literacy needs of children growing up in a complex and diverse world. Modern curricula, such as the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, support this understanding that children need multiple literacy skills to negotiate a multilingual and multimodal world. In fact, the Scottish Curriculum acknowledges the need for critical literacy skills, which impact outcomes in different areas including Citizenship and Modern Languages. This inquiry was designed with the aim of using the selected picturebooks as 'simulation grounds' or 'training fields' for children to develop both their visual literacy and Theory of Mind (ToM) as mentioned in Chapter Two while reader response theory and the cognitive critical lens were used to interpret children's transactions with the text. Results discussed in the preceding chapter confirm earlier findings that metafictive picturebooks are a unique resource that have multiple affordances that address a variety of competencies in young readers.

The main question was divided into three objectives each addressing one of the three aspects, mentioned above.

The first question

How do metafictive picturebooks afford reader engagement?

The cognitive stance examines the ways texts afford reader engagement so that they can develop an understanding of the characters' interiority. Metafictive picturebooks, with their complex tapestry involving narrators (extra/diegetic), narrative levels (multiple, interlinking and intertextual), visuals and words (synergistic, puzzling) and a host of subversive features like border breaking, tactility and indeterminacy, challenge readers.

These texts invite, indeed, compel the readers to engage using a range of competencies. The chosen picturebooks, all written and illustrated by Gravett, employ a range of devices, which call the readers' attention to the constructedness of the books themselves. The cast of characters, as seen in this study, instantly capture the imagination of the young reader, and the focaliser in each of the four books urged the readers to see the narrative from their own point of view. A first-person narrator like Little Mouse who is both a character at the heart of the action as well as an extradiegetic narrator, appeals to the reader's affect and draws an emotional reaction. Features like innovative paper engineering and the materiality of the text draw the reader in further, thus making reading an interactive (Dresang, 2008) and embodied process of touching and feeling as well as looking, thinking and reasoning. The content analysis of the books shows that these books were ideal vehicles upon which to base an investigation of reader's theory of mind and emotional literacy.

The second question

How do young bilingual children respond to the multimodal and metafictive features in the texts?

This study has shown that the spaces that metafiction opens up for negotiation of meaning, give greater opportunity for analytical discussion as well as greater scope for language learning. At the same time, it showed that when bilingual children have access to alternate ways of thinking about and using languages, they are more open to the metafictive challenge. Thus picturebooks that are metafictive and multimodal are a rich resource for children who are EAL/ESL learners.

From the findings that pointed to the notion of distancing as crucial to reading metafiction, we can infer that negotiating meaning from a more distant space, helps readers build resistance and criticality into the act of reading. At the same time, findings throw light on the physicality of the reading process, and the embodied responses from the readers which illustrate Nikolajeva's point that '(o)ur engagement with fiction is not transcendental; it is firmly anchored in the body' (2014b, p 10). The embodied aspects of cognition and a socialised self-dealing with emotions, feelings and memories are crucial for language learners to give meaning to their environment, be it at large in the world or within the classroom/school.

From the discussion I also note that the emergent language skills and cultural differences posed a constructive challenge to the participants in reading these texts. For children who are growing up with two languages, and possibly harbouring notions of being less than

adequate in the classroom due to their lower competency in the lingua franca, the ability to resist and critically distance themselves from the text has the potential to give them a sense of control and self-confidence. Thus metafictive picturebooks can provide a particularly effective means to challenge bilingual readers through engaging their thoughts, verbal expressions and their critical literacy skills.

The third question

How do young bilingual children interact with the characters' emotional states in the narratives?

Throughout the study, the young readers demonstrated through a number of ways that they were affectively engaged with the textual characters and the narratives. The participants showed their engagement by 'reading' the emotion ekphrasis of the characters and verbally and visually responding to it. They demonstrated engagement with the process of higher-order mind reading through the activities that were incorporated in the fieldwork design. Over time, the children showed the ability to interpret the features which allowed them to better understand the emotional states of the characters. They reflected their understanding of the characters through their verbal responses, with the performative and visual responses being particularly revealing of the children's thinking processes.

While language acquisition was not the primary aim of the intervention, the children learned functional language related to emotions, moods and feelings, which they were able to use appropriately when describing the particular scenes and moments in the narratives. This expanded vocabulary gave them the ability to consider the same emotion in both English and Urdu, translanguaging at the appropriate times. At the same time, they were able to consider their responses from a less involved and more measured or distant manner. Metafiction and the ways of looking at the text, the distancing and the resistance offered to meaning making, allowed the children to critically question characters' emotions instead of getting uncritically immersed in the narrative and possibly being overwhelmed by the emotions.

Repeated looking at the same texts allowed them to make sense of the metafictive features as well as develop critical thinking through which they were able to question the reliability of the narrative and the author. The children also showed signs of altering their mental constructs and schemas by providing alternative endings to the stories and the characters. From the multiple affordances offered by the metafictive nature of the picturebooks, the close engagement that that children demonstrated with the texts, their expanded notions of

emotional awareness and literacy and, ultimately, the textual empathy they showed towards the characters, confirm that metafiction is an ideal vehicle through which children might learn some critical and emotional literacy skills.

9.3 Measuring emotional literacy and empathy

This study has been unique in its methodology, participants, context as well as the combination of theoretical lenses used, creating a rich tapestry of strands twinned and linked together, sometimes cohering and at other times pulling at other links causing spaces and junctures of tension. The methods adopted by this study have shed light on children's awareness of emotions and their engagement with the textual characters. In one of the many moments of meta-awareness, I realised that measuring emotional literacy is a highly specialised aspect of social psychology, which is beyond the scope of this project and hence could not be a part of this intervention. Scholars such as Dewaele, Wei, van Oudenhoven and others have worked in great detail in the fields of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics to investigate the impact of multilingualism and multiculturalism on emotions and empathy (c.f. Dewaele 2004; Dewaele & Wei 2013; Dewaele & van Oudenhoven 2009, among others). Nevertheless, we do know that empathy is a way of thinking and a social skill, and from this study, it is possible to make assertions about how reader engagement, identification and theory of mind, working in harmony, can lead to changes in a young reader's affective engagement with the texts. These have the potential to impact emotional literacy and the sense of textual empathy in readers.

However, these assertions come with further qualifications: the context of learning in this study was most important, as was the scaffolding the children received during the intervention. It is not possible to ascertain if the awareness of affective engagement of the children extended beyond the textual interpretations and into their own lives. As I have stated earlier, caution has to be exercised as based on the current methods of study, one cannot claim transference of these skills due to 'direct causal effect' (Heath & Wolf 2005, p 39).

9.4 The 'so what' question

Children widen their own experiences when the literature acts as a window through which they see into the lives of others, which are different from their own. They learn to understand and see the world and their experiences through other perspectives. This links to honing their own affective engagement and awareness by activating their Theory of

Mind. But, how does it matter if they are more emotionally aware and engaged? To answer this question, I keep coming back to the notion of the social brain and the need for a greater social competence. This links to wider notions of good citizenship. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) validates this need especially through criteria like 'communicating with confidence' and 'showing increasing awareness of others in interactions' included in the aims for good Citizenship (Education Scotland, online, 2017.). The better our emotional awareness, the better we can identify with those in different situations and eventually, be more accepting of otherness.

9.5 The transformative potential of metafiction

During the journey of this inquiry, the role of metafiction has been crucial to developing critical thinking and literacy skills. Using the instances of the children reading and questioning the text at several moments, I have argued that metafiction opens up spaces of resistance to accepted practices and questions or disrupts traditional notions of stories and storytelling. I have also argued that engaged reading is an embodied act of seeing, noticing, thinking and feeling; reading metafiction makes the reader distance themselves from that very act of reading, nurturing a self-reflexive awareness of both our own somatic and mental functions, leading to metacognition. This tension within the various embodied aspects of reading in addition to the distancing from the text itself is jarring and unsettling, leading us to question our deeply ingrained notions of reading practices. This transformational potential, when nurtured by experienced readers, allows critical literacy skills to be developed in young readers.

In this era of polarisation and extreme narratives of intolerance, divisive politics, fake news, and the explosion of a variety of social platforms and media, we need a discerning readership, especially younger readers who usually are the most impressionable. While responsibility lies with the gatekeepers to manage access to different media of dissemination, the best kind of awareness is when the young readers themselves are wearing the mantle of criticality.

9.6 Pedagogical reflections

The process of deep reading, which enhances the reader's visual verbal and emotional literacies, requires time. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the constant

forward/backward, side-to-side, upward/downward set of movements, which is essential to make sense of the intentions and the inner motivations of the characters, is a process that demands multiple competencies. This act of reading needs to be slowed down and attention paid to the complexities of the books and the multiple ways in which children can respond. The rewards of reading are reaped when more time is allowed to the children to look closely, through repeated exposure to the text. Reading is more beneficial when children can read in small groups, which allows for generative and collaborative meaning-making. Benefits are also accrued from allowing children the space for self-expression and creative responses leading to more agency in meaning-making. Thus, this research inquiry adds to the growing scholarship that argues for pedagogical approaches that see reading as more than the development of literacy.

Use of the mother tongue in the classroom

From the teachers' reflections, I gathered that they found themselves unprepared and at a disadvantage with the notion of children using their mother tongues in the classroom. As a speaker of Urdu and Punjabi, I was able to invite the children to use their mother tongues, which the class teachers would not have been able to replicate. However, there are a number of practices already in place in schools to welcome children from different language backgrounds. Young bilingual children are emergent learners straddling two languages and cultures, and classrooms ought to reflect this fact by transforming into a bilingual space for children where multiple languages can be used. Teachers need to demonstrate a welcoming attitude and even simple gestures like saying 'hello' or 'welcome' in different languages to children or guardians foster an atmosphere of multilinguality. Andrea Zafirakou, the winner of the Global Teacher Prize 2018, advocates a similar practice to welcome families from different cultures. In a recent interview in the *Guardian* (Aitkenhead, 2018) she says, 'When they come into this huge, intimidating building, if you say to them '*namaste*' or '*vanakkam*' you see their faces light up. It means that you get them, that you're interested in them, that you are welcoming them, and that you appreciate their identity, their background – and they glow. Then what happens there, you've got complete and utter engagement from the parents.' ('Namaste' and 'vanakkam' are both words of greetings and respect in Hindi and Tamil respectively.) While I do believe that we need to go far beyond the language of welcome and hello, these are definitely positive starting points.

This attempt to bring the home languages in school is an effort to redress this imbalance between the different languages. Once the use of home languages in school is normalised, rather than feeling awkward or embarrassed about being EAL learners, children like Masood who have access to only their mother tongues, would not get labelled as the 'silent ones' who 'don't speak'. This would lead children to feel accepted and take pride in their linguistic heritage. This is the challenge for practitioners and might be achieved through fostering creative spaces that welcome multiple languages, and multicultural and multilingual books can offer a creative solution (c.f. McGilp's doctoral thesis, 2017).

The curriculum, according to McCarty (1993), acts like a mirror for learners through which they construct images of themselves. To answer the question I asked myself earlier about children's conceptions of their own bilinguality, this project, which brought their home languages to the school, potentially attributed positive values to the use of these languages in a traditionally all-English environment. This project, and projects such as these, that acknowledge and value the strong links with their home cultures, open ways to create positive cultural identities of the children for themselves. The need however is to reinforce these practices, so that they do not become a one-off special instance but a more accepted pedagogical practice.

9.7 Limitations of the research

While my study reached its aim, it also revealed some of the limitations of the empirical qualitative methods employed. The first limitation was that being a qualitative study with a small number of participants, the data gathered is unique and hence not easily generalisable. However, the aim of this research enquiry was not to formulate a generalisable model or theory that can be widely applied. Rather, its purpose was to apply a cognitive critical lens to understand readers' interaction with metafiction, with a particular focus on their emotional engagement. As I have already mentioned in an earlier section (4.1.2), using the theoretical perspective of interpretivism and transactional theory of reading does not pave way for generalised findings. Readerly transactions with literature and the emotions engendered in the process are specific and changeable with each reader; therefore generalisability was not the prime concern in this study.

Secondly, despite being invited to use their mother tongues during the Literature Circles, only a small percentage of the participants' responses were in Urdu/Hindi. The children communicated almost entirely in English, which was perhaps not their most fluent language so it was hard for them to fully express themselves. Indeed, I have noted

instances earlier in the thesis where participants demonstrated low confidence in their own English competency, but given the context of a British school with English as the primary language, they felt they had to communicate in English. I have previously discussed this issue of deficit notions surrounding speakers of other languages as one of my 'lines of tension' (in section 8.3.1). While the confidence of the participants increased over time, and they began to translanguage more frequently, overall attitudes towards English language learners need transforming, with a view to normalising multilinguality in schools.

The third limitation has been the unequal power equations between the adult-researcher and the child-participant about which I have already expressed my concerns (section 4.3.1). Despite attempts to minimise the disparity in power equations, there still existed some imbalance. For instance, I had already made a loose selection of the texts for the Literature Circle discussions before I met the participants. I had selected only one author for the study, and despite giving them options about which book to read on the day, on most occasions the children went along with my choice. In a future study, I would provide children with more options for participative response, and a wider range of metafictive texts to choose from. More importantly, often children feel obliged to give responses that they feel the adult is expecting to hear in a bid to please the researcher or gain their approval. While I tried my best not to influence the responses of the children, it is possible that some of their responses were guided by or based on my interests and inclinations that I brought to the study. In addition, while the cognitive literary lens widened our understanding of the children's verbal, visual and embodied responses to the texts, there still seemed to be a lot more going on under the surface which I as a researcher did not have access to. Rosenblatt refers to this as the 'iceberg of meaning' (Rosenblatt 1982, p 271) of which only the tip is visible to us as observers of children's meaning making processes. However, a glimpse of even that tip reveals the richness of the children's response. There is much more to be learnt from the response hidden below the surface and thus it becomes important to look for ways in which we can see more of it.

The fourth limitation has been the popular notions surrounding 'empathy' which is often used an easily recognisable, umbrella term for any demonstration of affect by readers in response to interacting with a text. Recently, initiatives in the UK like the Empathy Library and the EmpathyLab have led successful interventions in schools and with young people based around claims that reading text books helps build real life empathy. These claims are intuitive and in tune with the human urge to help and respond with kindness to those in less fortunate circumstances than ourselves. Thus empathy is almost always associated with

some kind of positive or affirmative action. It has been tempting to make similar claims for the books selected in this study and for the participants of the fieldwork. However, despite the fact that the participant's affective engagement with the texts was demonstrated through this study, there was limited view of the participants' understanding of aspects related to emotional literacy and empathy. Much of 'this backward and forward flow between books and life that takes place' (Rosenblatt 1982, p 272) remains subterranean in the children's minds. As I have already mentioned in section 9.3, it isn't possible to ascertain if the awareness of affective engagement was carried into and acted upon, in demonstrations of empathy, in the children's own lives outside of the Literature Circle established for the purposes of this study. Future research investigating affective textual engagement of young readers, looking more closely at the links between school and home could be a first step to address this.

9.8 Further research

This study has opened up multiple avenues for further research. More investigation with young bilingual learners could build a better picture with the potential of using other contemporary picturebooks. As mentioned in the previous section, metafiction could be used for detailed analysis alongside methodologies that are more participative and possibly involve teachers and children for instance in selecting books in other languages, choosing activities, etc. Involving teachers, parents and guardians and creating intergenerational spaces for reading and discovery could forge stronger links with home languages and cultures.

In the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, Kramsch (2009) urges us to look in *'richer detail at the lived experience of the multiple language users'*. The tapestry of intricately woven, interlinking and interweaving strands that I brought together and braided into ever-complex patterns in this study, attempted to look at 'the lived experience' from a multiple disciplinary perspective. This was a small yet significant study representing what a huge section of the reading population negotiates every day.

As literary researchers and passionate readers, we already know and appreciate the joy of reading. Barthes' *jouissance* (1973) referred to the bliss and satisfaction from reading complex texts. Similarly, Sipe and McGuire write that reading complex and sophisticated picturebooks give the feeling of pleasurable satisfaction that can be derived from dealing with the challenges of 'unsettling' narratives that 'jar' the reader's expectations (2008, p

283). A similar satisfaction comes from reading a good piece of detective fiction, when all the clues fall into the right place and the mystery is solved with a satisfying click. The children learned to be investigators looking for clues and answering the riddles posed by the texts. Thus, these books, and books like these, can be pleasurable, blissful, satisfying and innovative training grounds for the young minds.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical approval from Glasgow City Council

Phone: Direct Line 0141-287-3556

Fax: 0141-287 4945

Email: michele.mcclung@education.glasgow.gov.uk

Website: www.glasgow.gov.uk

Our Ref : MM/Research/E61

Date: 16th October 2014

If phoning please ask for Dr Michele McClung

Soumi Dey

Research Office, Room 683

St Andrews Building

University of Glasgow

11 Eldon Street

GLASGOW

G3 6NH

Dear Soumi,

Proposed Research Project – Emerging bilingual children and language acquisition: A cognitive approach to young readers' meaning-making from postmodern picture books.

Thank you for your completed research application form in respect of the above.

I now write to advise you that this department has no objection to you seeking assistance with your project from [redacted] Primary School in Glasgow. I would

confirm however that it is very much up to the Heads of Establishments to decide whether or not they participate and assist you in your research. I would advise that you link closely with the head teacher of [redacted] Primary School, [redacted], [redacted] who may have specific areas that she wishes to discuss with you.

A copy of this letter should be sent to the Head of Establishment when contacting the school, along with a copy of your PVG certificate. You must have a current PVG certificate to undertake any work in a school.

I hope that this is helpful and that you have success with your project. We would be interested to see the findings from your research once it is completed.

Yours sincerely

Michele McClung

Dr Michele McClung
Principal Officer
Planning, Performance and Research Unit

Appendix 2: Literature Circle Observation Proforma

Study: **Emerging bilingual children and language acquisition: A cognitive approach to young readers' meaning-making from postmodern picturebooks**

Researcher: Soumi Dey

School Name: _____

Date and time of session: _____

Duration of task: _____

Group size and gender balance:

Context (learning context – anything that might affect the session, ie absences, interesting classroom event etc)

_____

_____

Set up, prior work and group organisation:

Example: Children asked to move to the designated corner and seated. Books handed out – one book shared by two children

Starting the session:

Example: Children are presented with copies of the book and they start to look at the cover page.

Walkthrough of the book:

Notes on children's reactions to each page/double spread.

Page 1

Page 2 etc

Researcher Reflection:

- Notes about the experience of conducting the session.
- Parts/activities/ methods that worked well
- Parts/activities that need changing

Session overview:

- Highlights of children's engagement and response.
- Any thoughts and ideas for next session.
- Thoughts to be shared with the teacher.

Appendix 3: Interview questionnaire with teachers

Ethical Approval Application
April 2015
Study: **Emerging bilingual children and language acquisition: A cognitive approach to young readers' meaning-making from postmodern picturebooks**

Researcher: **Soumi Dey**

Intended Questions for the Interviews with teachers

I am going to conduct semi-structured interviews with teachers involved in the study within a month of the completion of my study. As is in the case of semi-structured interviews, I will ask follow-up questions according to the responses, but my main questions are going to be related to the impact of my project.

From a teacher's perspective:

1. What did you think of the selected books (mentioned below) with regards to being used with a group of Primary 1 pupils?
    a. What aspect of the books did you think worked well in this context?
    b. Which aspects of the books were you not particularly happy with?
    c. Have you worked in a classroom context with these books before?
    d. Would you use the books with your pupils in future?
    e. What difficulties do you foresee in using these books as learning tools in the whole-class scenario?

From the children's perspective:

2. Do you think the children liked the books? How?
    a. Did they ask about the books after the study was completed?
    b. Was there any particular aspect of the books that you thought the children were very attracted to?
    c. Were there any aspects of the books that you thought the children could not relate to?
    d. Did the children (want to) share the books with their classmates?
    e. Did you notice any change in the way children engage with characters from books after the study ended?
    f. Have they demonstrated any change in the way they interact with their friends and classmates?
3. Please give your thoughts and comments on the activities that were used during the study
    a. Would / have you use the same activities again in your class?
    b. Which ones did you particularly like? Why?
    c. Which of them do you did you think wouldn't work well? Why?

4. What did you think of the pupils using/not using their first language during the study?
5. If this study were to be conducted again, what would you like the researcher to do differently?
6. Thank you very much for your contributions and your time.

Appendix 4: Fieldwork Chronology

Phase	Time/duration	Task	Purpose
Pre phase I	Mid to Late September 2014	2 meetings with Head Teacher and the 4 class teachers	To propose my research project and seek input on my fieldwork plan
	Late September 2014	2 sessions of observing one P1 and one P2 class each	To familiarise myself with the class routine as well as making myself visible to the children
	1st week of October 2014	Class Teachers and Head Teacher nominate the participant children	Teachers were best aware of the needs and capabilities of the children
	1st week of October 2014	Handing out the PLS and Consent forms	To inform relevant gatekeepers and seek consent to conduct study
	2nd week of October	Meeting with parents of participants	So they had an opportunity to ask any questions, and so I had an opportunity to share my project plans and the books with them
Phase I	20/10/14 to 10/11/14	Phase I 16 sessions, 40 minutes each, held within the school	Establishing Literature Circles (LC) with children and exploring the selected books
Post Phase I	January 2015	Dissemination of early findings via Project Report to HT to be shared with interested teachers and parents.	So the gatekeepers knew how the first phase had progressed; and so they could remain invested in my project
	January 2015	Dissemination workshop with teachers of the whole school	So the teachers could get a better understanding of my project and to share best practices
Phase II	February 2015	Phase II 8 sessions, an hour each held, within the school	Continuing to explore the books and engaging in new activities
Phase III	September 2015	Phase III 8 sessions, an hour each, held within the school	Continuing to explore the books, engaging in new activities and also sharing the books with the classes.
Post Phase III	November 2015	Conclusion meeting with Head Teacher and involved teachers	Providing update about the project, sharing thoughts about the students and how these books, and similar texts, could be further explored n the classrooms.

Appendix 5: 1st Ethical Approval, University of Glasgow

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application ☐ ***Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application*** ☒

Application Details

Application Number:

Applicant's Name

Project Title

Application Status **Approved**

Start Date of Approval *(d.m.yr)*

(blank if Changes Required/ Rejected)

End Date of Approval of Research Project *(d.m.yr)*

Only if the applicant has been given **approval** can they proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations **(where Changes are Required)**

- ***Where changes are required all applicants must respond*** in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and upload this as the **Resubmission Document** online to explain the changes you have made to the application. All resubmitted application documents should then be uploaded.

- ***If application is Rejected*** *a full new application must be submitted via the online system. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document uploaded as part of the new application. A new reference number will be generated.*

(Shaded areas will expand as text is added)

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE **APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

MINOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE **APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MINOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

REVIEWER COMMENTS **APPLICANT RESPONSE TO REVIEWER COMMENTS**

(OTHER THAN SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS)

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the College Ethics Administration, email address: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

End of Notification.

Appendix 6: 2nd Ethical Approval, University of Glasgow

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application ☐ ***Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application*** ☒

Application Details

Application Number:

Applicant's Name

Project Title

Application Status **Approved**

Start Date of Approval *(d.m.yr)*

(blank if Changes Required/ Rejected)

End Date of Approval of Research Project *(d.m.yr)*

Only if the applicant has been given **approval** can they proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations (where Changes are Required)

- ***Where changes are required all applicants must respond*** in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and upload this as the **Resubmission Document** online to explain the changes you have made to the application. All resubmitted application documents should then be uploaded.
- ***If application is Rejected*** *a full new application must be submitted via the online system. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document uploaded as part of the new application. A new reference number will be generated.*

(Shaded areas will expand as text is added)

Major Recommendation of the Committee	**Applicant response to major recommendations**

Minor Recommendation of the Committee	**Applicant response to minor recommendations**

Reviewer comments	**Applicant response to reviewer comments**
(other than specific recommendations)	

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the College Ethics Administration, email address: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

End of Notification.

Appendix 7: Plain Language Statement for Parents

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

1. Study Title and Researcher Details

Study title: **Emerging bilingual children reading complex picturebooks: An inquiry into the ways they make meaning, acquire language and gain emotional literacy**

Researcher: Soumi Dey

PhD Candidate, School of Education, College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow.

Tel: 00447533526501, Email: s.dey.2@research.gla.ac.uk

PhD Supervisors: Dr Evelyn Arizpe and Ms Julie McAdam

2. Invitation paragraph

Dear parents,

Your child is being invited to participate in the second and third phases of a study in which they took part last October (2014). Like last time, this will examine the ways young children engage with picturebooks, making meaning from the words and pictures in the texts.

Children will attend a series of classroom sessions where they will read a few books by the author Emily Gravett. These sessions will be held in school in June and September 2015.

The details of the study have been explained in this plain language statement. Please read the following information carefully before deciding to take part in it. You can ask questions if you find anything that is unclear. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

Recent studies have shown that picturebooks help children improve their English language skills. This study is with children who are learning English as a second/additional language. The group will read picturebooks which have clever features like sketches and pictures, pop-ups, different textures in the pages etc., which children find interesting and fun. I will focus on how children form an emotional bond with the characters in the texts. The thinking behind my study is that appreciating characters in picturebooks gives children a better understanding of real life people, their feelings and emotions. The project will include reading activities and methods which are a normally used by teachers for schoolwork.

4. Why has my child been chosen?

I would like to work with children who come from Hindi, Urdu or Punjabi speaking families as I understand and speak these languages myself.

Your child understands and uses Hindi/Urdu/Punjabi at home and the teacher thinks that he/she would enjoy reading the selected books and benefit from participating in the activities.

5. Does my child have to take part?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you do decide that your child will participate, if at any point your child does not wish to continue, you will be free to withdraw their participation.

6. What will happen to my child if he/she takes part?

If your child takes part, he/she will discuss selected picturebooks with me (the researcher) and a group of children, and do activities around the book themes. I will give them tasks like drawing, writing, acting and craftwork, and their work will be audio and video recorded. These tasks and methods are the same as they would normally practice when reading picturebooks in the class.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your child's participation in this study will be kept strictly private and confidential. Written work based on this study will not name the school, the children or the teachers who are a part of this study. To avoid being recognised, false names will be used for all children and teachers whenever quoting them in my notes. All recording will take inside the school premises and all video recorded data will be left with the school at all times for further use in learning and teaching practices. No identifiable photos or images will be used anywhere outside the school.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be submitted to University of Glasgow as a PhD thesis. This means, this research will help to develop language and emotional learning both at home and school contexts. A written summary of the results or a copy of the final report can be provided upon request.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by Soumi Dey, PhD student at the University of Glasgow.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by my supervisors Dr. Evelyn Arizpe and Ms Julie McAdam and the University of Glasgow, School of Education, College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

11. Contact for Further Information

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the study please contact me:

Soumi Dey

Tel: 00447533526501

Email: s.dey.2@research.gla.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project, please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer–Dr. Muir Houston:

muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk Telephone: 0141-330-4699

Appendix 8: Plain Language Statement for Teachers

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

1. Study Title and Researcher Details

Study title: Emerging bilingual children reading complex picturebooks: An inquiry into the ways they make meaning, acquire language and gain emotional literacy

Researcher: Soumi Dey

PhD Candidate, School of Education, College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow.

Tel: 00447533526501, Email: s.dey.2@research.gla.ac.uk

PhD Supervisors: Dr Evelyn Arizpe and Ms Julie McAdam

2. Invitation paragraph

Dear Teachers,

You are being invited to participate in the second and third phases of a study which, as a part of a PhD research project, will examine the ways young bilingual children engage with picturebooks, making meaning from the words and pictures in the texts.

The study will take part in three stages:

1st: A series of sessions with selected children where the researcher explores their interaction with books by author and illustrator Emily Gravett. For phase 2, this stage will take place in the school over three weeks in May and June 2015. For phase 3 of the study sessions with the children will be held in September and October 2015.

2nd: A round of informal interviews with teachers who are involved with the study two weeks after the first stage has concluded to evaluate any impact on the children

3rd: A workshop with interested teachers after the third phase where I will be sharing resources and methods used in the study and presenting any findings.

The details of the study have been explained in this plain language statement. Please read the following information carefully before deciding to take part in it. You can ask questions if you find anything that is unclear. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

Picturebooks are known to help children extend their vocabulary and improve their English language skills as well as enhance their sense of cultural identity. This study will focus on picturebooks created by Emily Gravett – these are 'multimodal' books with features like words, pictures, pop-ups, and different textures in the pages etc., which keenly interest young readers. I am interested in how bilingual children respond to these books, with a special focus on how they empathise with the characters in the texts. The premise of my study is that appreciating characters in picturebooks gives children a better understanding of real life people, their feelings and emotions. Thus children, especially those who are acclimatizing to a culture other than that of their parents, become better adjusted to society and life on the whole.

4. Why have I been chosen?

Being a part of a multicultural school in Glasgow, you work with young pupils many of whom have different home languages (such as Hindi, Urdu & Punjabi). As a teacher you have an important role in their literacy development. At the same time you see them negotiate between the different home and school cultures and languages. Often these children need little more support in understanding their friends and classmates who come from home cultures different to their own. Thus your role in improving their emotional literacy is crucial. You have been chosen as you can help identify these literacy needs of your pupils.

5. Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to participate in this study, you will be free to withdraw your participation at any point if you feel you no longer wish to take part in the project.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you take part, you will be asked to engage with the following elements of the project:

Meeting with researcher: During this meeting the researcher will share with you the plan for the project, agree on selected pupils and ask you to think of pseudonyms for each child.

Literature Circles with children (May – June 2015): These sessions would involve participating children discussing selected picturebooks and doing activities around the book themes. There will be 6 such sessions each lasting an hour each. (Please see attached project timelines and session plans)

Interviews (June 2015): After the last Literature Circle session, the researcher will hold short interviews (lasting 15-20 mins) about your evaluation of the project. You will also be asked to reflect on any impact on children in recognising emotions in literary characters.

Dissemination workshop: (October 2015): If you are interested, you will be invited to participate in a workshop where the researcher will share the resources, methods and findings from the project.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your participation in this study will be kept strictly private and confidential. Interview transcripts and Literature Circle notes/ transcripts will be anonymised/ de-identified and all quotations shall use pseudonyms. All video recorded data will be left with the school for further use in learning and teaching practices. No identifiable images will be used anywhere outside the school.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be submitted to University of Glasgow as a PhD thesis. This means, this research will help to develop language and emotional literacies both at home and school contexts. A written summary of the results or a copy of the final report can be provided upon request.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by Soumi Dey, PhD student at the University of Glasgow.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by my supervisors Dr. Evelyn Arizpe and Ms Julie McAdam and the University of Glasgow, School of Education, College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

11. Contact for Further Information

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the study please contact me:

Soumi Dey

Tel: 00447533526501

Email: s.dey.2@research.gla.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer–Dr. Muir Houston:

muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk Telephone: 0141-330-4699

Appendix 9: Consent Form for Parents of prospective participants

(Note: This Consent form will be translated into Hindi / Urdu / Punjabi on a case by case basis, if required)

Title of Project: Emerging bilingual children reading complex picturebooks: An inquiry into the ways they make meaning, acquire language and gain emotional literacy

Name of Researcher: Soumi Dey

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my child at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to the sessions being audio recorded.
4. I consent to two of the sessions being video recorded.
5. I consent to the researcher taking a copy of my child's work done during the study.
6. I understand that my child will be referred to by pseudonym (a false name) in any publications arising from the research.
7. I understand that for safety and privacy, video recorded data will not leave the school at any time.
8. I agree / do not agree (circle as applicable) to take part in the above study.

_____

Name of Participant

_____ _____ _____

Name of Parent/Guardian Date Signature

_____ _____ _____

Researcher Date Signature

Appendix 10: Consent Form for Teachers

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Consent Form for Teachers

Title of Project: Emerging bilingual children reading complex picturebooks: An inquiry into the ways they make meaning, acquire language and gain emotional literacy

Name of Researcher: Soumi Dey

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw myself or any of my pupils at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to the sessions being audio recorded.
4. I consent to two of the sessions being video recorded.
5. I consent to the researcher taking a copy of my pupils' work done during the study.
6. I understand that I, as well as my pupils, will be referred to by pseudonyms in any publications arising from the research.
7. I understand that for safety and privacy, video recorded data will not leave the school at any time.
8. I agree / do not agree (circle as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Teacher	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature