CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

'Early literacy' was a term originally coined to reflect young children's intuitive capacities to learn and develop an understanding of the complex conceptual foundation for literacy learning without formally being taught (Berger, 2005). However, in most instances now, the definition of early literacy has been reduced to the mechanical aspect of learning how to decode and encode written language (Comber & Nicholas, 2004; Neuman & Roskos, 2005). This constricted view of early literacy suits well with an approach to learning that views teaching as a mere transmission of knowledge and learners as empty vessels; where all children are taught the same thing on an inflexible schedule in a one-size-fits-all format (Clay, 1991; Cooper & Jones, 2005). Simplifying the scope of early literacy conveniently allows for controlling learning by means of standardized tests and measurable outcomes.

Unfortunately, a narrow definition of early literacy not only sets to limit literacy instruction, but most importantly it inevitably leads to a limited and narrow view of literacy and learning by young children. This restricted view of early literacy is reflected in the reading programs developed for young learners in schools. In most schools, it was assumed that learning to read and write came about by means of direct teaching of the alphabetic system and sound-letter relations (decoding and encoding written text). In the context of Malaysian schools, the curriculum specification for the Reading component of the English Curriculum for primary school (KBSR) clearly states the importance of

students' ability to recognize letters and to know the sounds of the letters (Ministry of Education, 2001). The rationale given for this is so that pupils can string together these sounds and produce a word. In this context, the ability to read is seen as a progression from one stage to the other and the focus has always been on phonemic awareness, phonics and fluency (Wood, 2005). Though these aspects do have some importance in the process of becoming literate, reading is much more than this. Thus, in recent years, theorists, scholars, researchers, and educators have broadened the term literacy and the processes of literacy learning as an individual, social and a cultural practice – a process that begins even before children arrive at school (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Clay, 1991; Hill, 1997; Rogers & Schofield, 2005; Wyatt-Smith & Kimber, 2009).

If children are not seen as meagre decipiers of the alphabetic code but also as thinkers, theory builders and meaning makers, then literacy learning is deemed as an individual process because literacy is seen as a meaning-making process. Literacy is thus not "handed down to children but they uniquely construct and refine their literacy through active interpretation and purposeful sense making" (Whitmore, Martens, Goodman, & Owocki, 2004, p. 294). Children are believed to be meaning-makers from birth and because of this they are internally motivated to construct knowledge in order to explain their experiences. Inevitably, children not only want to know, but they want to make meaning, they want to comprehend; hence, they have this constant need to ask "why". This motivation to know and understand will propel their quest to learn about literacy – what it is, what it does, and how it is used – prior to formal instruction (Berger, 2005).

In addition to looking at literacy as an individual process, over the years researchers have acknowledged that literacy and language learning are embedded in social and cultural contexts. This shift in thinking about literacy signalled a move away from defining literacy learning as merely a development of cognitive skills that occurs in individuals, to viewing literacy as related to real life situations within a socio-cultural context. Thus, instead of seeing literacy and language simply as an interaction with print, one needs to ask, who interacted with print, for what purpose, and what was the nature of the interaction (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener, 2004; Rogers, 1997; Rogers & Schofield, 2005; Wyatt-Smith & Kimber, 2009).

When literacy was conceptualized as a social and cultural practice, new ways of encouraging literacy learning emerged. In particular, observant educators and researchers who understood the potential of childhood as a unique culture have developed literacy environments that acknowledge children's imagination, creativity, and genuine motivation to express their ideas (Rogers & Schofield, 2005). Children's previous knowledge and their entire collection of life experience are seen as the main influence in the way they interact with literacy. Dyson (2001) believed that children are experienced composers in speech, play, and drawing and they are equipped to voyage into levels of school literacy; however, they must be allowed to utilize this knowledge in the quest to literacy. Whitmore et al. (2004) suggested that "classrooms that are socio-cultural systems, in which children use, try out, and manipulate language as they make sense and create meaning, particularly with access to and use of multiple sign systems and play, provide reasons for children to build on their current literacy knowledge and

understanding" (p. 311). In this context, the meaning making process is not limited to deducing verbal and printed language, instead meaning is made, interpreted, communicated and shared through many forms of representations (Hill, 1997; Wyatt-Smith & Kimber, 2009).

In addition, Vygotsky (1978) stressed that make believe, play, drawing, and writing can be viewed as different moments in an essentially unified process of development of written language. As a symbolic activity, pretend play allows children to develop and refine their capacities to use symbols, to represent experiences, and to construct imaginary worlds, capacities they will draw on when they begin to read and write. In short, children are not just meaning-makers, they are also keen to convey their meaning and express their ideas and theories. Young children, however, use meaning-making systems that are not necessarily expressed in words.

According to Kress (2003) other symbol systems, such as art, music, drama, and photography, should be recognized as forms of literacy. Kendrick and McKay (2004) suggested that this broader definition of literacy goes beyond language symbols to that of multiple symbols. As children naturally move between art, music, movement, mathematics, construction, drama, and language as ways to think about the world, express ideas, explain thoughts, and communicate with others (Kendrick & McKay, 2004), we must then "counter the pressure to narrowly define learning to read and write and give children significant recognition for their exploration in all modes of representation" (Curtis & Carter, 2000, p. 81). This is crucial because as children develop

a conceptual understanding of literacy, their ability to use literacy in a conventional way is both limited and limiting (Lovell & Sample Gosse, 2008; Yagelski, 2000). Kendrick and McKay (2004) argue that "there is an urgent need for including in school curricula multimodal representations which allow for the expression of much fuller range of human emotions and experience, and which acknowledge the limits of language" (p. 111). In their study Kendrick and McKay (2004) demonstrated how children successfully used drawing as a medium to express their knowledge and theories about the meanings of literacy.

Reading is an activity which is both perceptual and cognitive, and perception (auditory and visual) and cognition (thinking and problem solving) change markedly between five and seven years in all children (Clay, 1991; Paivio, 1979). Thus, schooling must profit from, and contribute to, these changes. Visual exploration, visual scanning, and visual pick-up of information in print are first-year learning tasks of major importance for the school child often neglected by educators and researchers because they are not easy to observe or record (Clay, 1991). Language skills are very important for reading but can only be applied to literacy tasks if children learn where to direct their attention as they explore with their eyes. In addition, cognitive growth will not be stimulated as effectively if there is too much early emphasis on language instead of creating a balance between verbal and visual experiences (Paivio, 2006). As the technology and information structure change, children must have literacy skills in selecting, organizing, and evaluating information in an increasingly visually-dominated culture. Visual images are becoming the predominant form of communication across a

range of learning and teaching resources, delivered across a range of media and formats (Lewis, 2001). The proliferation of images means that visual literacy is now crucial for obtaining information, constructing knowledge and building successful educational outcomes (McDougall, 2007). To be an effective communicator in today's world, a person needs to be able to interpret, create and select images to convey a range of meanings. Thus, the development of early literacy should be closely related to the development of visual literacy.

Background of the Study

The Reading component of the English curriculum in primary schools in Malaysia focuses on the teaching of reading skills to enable learners to become independent. The curriculum also emphasized that in reading, students need to be taught and exposed to various types of knowledge sources. These knowledge sources include the use of previous knowledge, letter-sound relationships, grammatical structure, contextual cues, and visual input. Clay (1991) stated that teaching students to read by utilizing only one source of information is actually limiting the children's opportunity to discover other sources available to make sense of text. Clay added that "many sources of cues allow for confirming check and act as stimulus to error correction." (p. 311). Wyatt-Smith and Kimber (2009) believed that the different ways of representing meaning − image, gesture, sound, music, speech, writing, movement, *et cetera* − is a "mode with its own distinctive features or semiotic resources that can be called upon in any combination to make meaning" (p. 72).

In schools, unfortunately, more often than not, a certain knowledge source is given more emphasis than others depending on the teacher's understanding of what literacy is. Thus, although the curriculum objectives have clearly stated that teachers need to develop the above mentioned knowledge sources, the teaching of reading in most primary schools has focused on certain knowledge sources only and have used limited types of texts (Abel, 2002; Lee, 1987). Some reading classes for instance have been turned into grammar lessons, and the texts used in the reading class have been adapted or changed to suit the language purpose of the lesson. Reading texts have also been used as drills for students to know tenses or subject-verb agreement thus defeating the real purpose of teaching reading which is to know the meaning of text. The phonic approach has also taken center stage in teaching reading to young learners. Students are usually taught words in isolation first before they are given a text to read. At this stage, the emphasis is on sounding out the words correctly so that they are able to recognize not only the letters used in the words but also the sounds that each letters carries. As sound and letter relationship has been given much focus in the teaching of reading to young learners, less emphasis is given on developing their visual skills or activating their background knowledge. There is an urgent need to develop visual perception before anything else as reading is an activity which demands the analysis of complex visual stimuli. Thus children need to have the ability to search a picture or text with the eye and brain to pick up information that can be interpreted. It is also believed that visual perception of textual features is part of the inner processing system from which the reader generates reading behavior (Clay, 1991).

Furthermore, the world now is experiencing an explosion of knowledge and with the advancing media technologies, most of this knowledge comes in the form of visual input. In the digital environment of the 21st century, it is becoming increasing clear that visual imagery – with all it entails, including creativity, cognitive expansion, and literal and emotional expression – is essential in developing meaning through the written world (Lewis, 2001). Our children are bombarded with visual images everywhere they go and some of these images are the main means in transmitting messages rather than words. Educators and students are finding that they must be able to both read the written words and decode the visual images that are often integral to them. Thus, it is crucial that we understand how children read images, how they extract meaning from images and how they use these strategies in the literacy acquisition process. Picture books which consist of visual and written input provide us a ground for studying how children process visual and textual inputs in order to construct meaning from the text.

Picture Books and Visual Literacy

The attention that children pay to pictures and text and the relationship that they construct between picture and text helps in children's literacy development especially the development of visual literacy (Clay, 1991; Hudelson, 1994). Picture books have been used as reading materials to teach reading to young learners but the reading and cognitive processes that children engage in when reading picture books have not been given much focus because most reading is defined as the ability to read texts (Paivio, 2006). Thus, the development of children's visual literacy through the reading of picture books has been much neglected.

The significance of visual literacy has been apparent throughout history and across disciplines. For example, the reading of maps and x-rays has been vitally significant in our lives. Similarly humans have relied on images to make meaningful interpretations and understandings of sophisticated and complex ideas such as mathematical or chemical formulas or the reading of architectural plans. The mixing of linguistic and pictorial elements was seen as the best medium for explanatory representation of conceptual structures (Bamford, 2003).

The term visual literacy can generally be defined as the ability to communicate and understand visual means (Riesland, 2005). Visual literacy includes the group of skills which enable an individual to "understand and use visuals for intentionally communicating with others" (Ausburn & Ausburn, 1978, p. 291). Visual literacy is what is seen with the eye and what is 'seen' with the mind (Bamford, 2003). A visually literate person should be able to read and write visual language. This includes the ability to successfully decode and interpret visual messages and to encode and compose meaningful visual communications.

Researchers believe that one of the first complex mental operations babies perform is to visualize and create memory pictures (Bamford, 2003). For example, a child of six to eight weeks has a clear memory picture of her mother and can distinguish this person from other women, even those women who look very similar. Children can distinguish the difference between drawing and writing as well as pictures from print at a very young age (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1983; Hudelson, 1994). The distinction between

drawing and writing is a very important aspect in literacy development as both drawing and writing are forms of symbolic systems. Children at a very early stage know that pictures as well as words are forms of symbols used by the writer (or illustrator) to convey meaning. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1983) in their study of children's literacy before schooling found that when children were given a picture and a word, at first they would not differentiate the word and the picture. The children then expected the word to be a label for the picture. At the third stage, the text was expected to provide cues with which to confirm predictions based on the picture. When the children were asked the relationship of pictures and print, they expected print to contain the name of the picture. This finding, according to Ferreiro and Teberosky, shows the beginning stage of searching for confirmation in the text.

When Ferreiro and Teberosky (1983) later gave the children a picture with sentence reading task, somewhat similar levels appeared. At the beginning, the children went from one system of symbolic representation to the other as if together they expressed a meaning. There was little attention given to the fact that writing was a transcription of oral language. If the children were asked to read the story, they would generate text from the picture and from oral language. They would construct an oral text inferring the content from the picture, sometimes imitating the style of the readers, and using intonation patterns and gestures (if they have been read to). The same text under different pictures would, at this stage, take on the meaning of the pictures. Only at the third level did children move their focus to the graphic properties of the text. They expected the text to name things that were pictured, but only things in pictures. To them

print must represent sentences that they could associate with the picture. A new stage was reached when relationship was formed between syllabic segments of a word that named something and selected graphic segments of the text. Finally, print was seen as representing sentences associated with the picture and some degree of relationship was established between segmentation of the utterance and of the graphic parts of the text.

Clay (1991) in her longitudinal study found similar sequence in five year old children in their first year at school. McKenzie (1985) reported similar behaviors among children observed in British infant school. Hudelson (1994) through her series of longitudinal case studies, documenting Spanish language literacy development programs of children enrolled in a whole-language bilingual program in Arizona, United States of America reading familiar and unfamiliar storybooks also found similar progression in kindergarten children, first and second graders. In the context of second language, Shiel (2002) reported that native speakers of English (four to five-year olds) when asked to read picture books in Irish language relied heavily on the visual inputs in the picture books to understand the words and phrases in the stories apart from other supports from the teacher.

These findings suggest to us that firstly, the conception of print as a label for the picture is an important moment in the child's understanding of written language because the child has begun to work out what kind of representational system written language is (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1983). Secondly, attention to the formal properties of print and correspondence with sound segments is the final step in a progression, not the entry point

to understanding what written language is (Clay, 1993; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1983; Hudelson, 1994). Thus, many conceptual shifts about the nature of written language have to occur before the child begins to use the alphabetic principle of letter-sound relationships which is often considered to be the beginning of reading (Clay, 1991).

These findings also suggest that picture books are materials that should be given much attention in developing early literacy, especially visual literacy. For the pictures in picture books not only generate interest in the books but they also help to enhance the children's visual and cognitive development which are essential in the process of learning to read.

Statement of the Problem

Children are different from one another; they see things differently, they understand things differently and they learn differently. Inevitably their experiences in achieving early literacy may also differ. Research that supports a transactional view of early literacy argues that children need to value and be valued for who they are and where they come from (Whitmore, Martens, Goodman, & Owocki, 2005). They also need to control their own literacy processes and they need time to read and write. Children enter school having learned different things in different ways in different cultures and communities (Stein & Newfield, 2004; Hill, 1997). These differences are the ones that they bring to school especially in their attempt to learn how to read and these differences should be seen as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. In other words, emergent literacy is not a process that needs to stop when children come to school; rather, it is

"crucial that schools create environments that broaden children's prior literacy experiences and by doing so expand children's perception about literacy" (Berger, 2005, p. 6).

Since literacy is very much embedded in the social and cultural contexts, any changes in these two aspects will continuously affect and change literate practices. In this information age, a growing number of studies have shown that there is a need to acknowledge the multimodal perspective of literacy (Berger, 2005; Kress, 2003; Lewis, 2001; Whitmore et al., 2005). The term "multiliteracies" acknowledges the multiplicity of meaning-making modes (visual, textual, audio, etc.) (New London Group, 2000). In this context, visual images play a key role in approaches to literacy, thus visual literacy is considered as part of new literacies and mutiliteracies that seek to understand the evolving nature of literacy in the new millennium. Several studies have shown the importance of using visuals with text. Craik and Lockhart (1972) and Paivio (1979) agreed that the use of visuals with text creates both verbal and nonverbal codes as well as connections between the two. Individuals can process information in a variety of ways, and these processes determine what is learned and how well. There appear to be qualitatively different levels of processing, and information more deeply processed is likely to have a stronger memory path, and therefore, will be remembered longer (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). In addition, the spatial nature of illustrations opens a range of learning possibilities not available when language is used alone (Craik & Tulving, 1975).

In the context of Malaysian young learners, although the national curriculum acknowledges the fact that learners differ from each other in their individual strengths, abilities and learning styles and preferences, children in schools are usually prescribed into one reading program that follows a required sequence determined by the teacher (Clay, 1991; Soundy & Yun, 2006/2007; Wood, 2005). This reading program emphasizes systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (Pinnel, 2002) as these are the easiest to measure and to report for outcomes. Hamayan and Pfleger (1987) suggested that one of the mistakes teachers made in teaching second language reading is by using the phonics methods as they feel that phonics methods reduce reading (and writing) to a matter of matching letters with sounds and English is a language that does not have a very high ratio of symbol-to-sound correspondence. Many symbols represent more than one sound and, similarly, many sounds are represented by more than one symbol. Children who are unable to make sense of this symbol-sound relationship in the reading lessons will fall deep into cognitive confusion which will not be untangled if they are expected to move along through the same sequence as others. Thus, children who are unable to read will continue not being able to read which eventually will lead to damaging self-confidence and self-esteem (Whitebread, 2002). It is quite ironic that we expect children to follow a rigid sequence in learning to read when, quite contrary to being linear, the literacy learning process is cyclical, allowing for zigs and zags, revisiting, and rethinking (Whitmore et al., 2005).

In addition, because of the national curriculum guide, national textbook series, and common traditions of schooling, teaching instructions too tend to be uniform. The curriculum and the competitive examination system leave little time and desire for child-initiated questions, or for the development of their ideas, imagination, and creative thought (Hu, 2004). As a result, teachers give very little time to developing visual thinking and learning, and visual literacy is hardly included in frameworks that identify the essentials of literacy instruction (Roskos, Christie, & Richgels, 2003).

The awareness of visual literacy as an important part of literacy in general is a relatively new field of inquiry in early education (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2003). Recent research is beginning to investigate how children read images in picture books (Arizpe & Styles, 2003). Through the use of multiple modes of representation, children from different language backgrounds are finding ways to communicate with one another (Stein & Newfield, 2004). Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland and Warschauer (2003) affirmed that there is a need for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers to be more sensitive on how multiliteracies can affect their students' second language development. They also added that in understanding multiliteracies and second language learning, it is important for teachers not to impose uniform norms on their students without taking into consideration their cultural and societal contexts. Thus, more studies need to be conducted to examine how young readers from culturally different pedagogies engage with image and writing in their literacy practices (Soundy & Yun, 2006/2007). Observing children and interacting with children while they are engaging in literary activities involving picture books will allow us to better understand different

ways in which children construct meaning from visual and textual inputs and how children link literacy and artistic elements from the world of picture books with their own experiences, feelings, and imagination.

As today's world becomes more visually saturated, there is a rising need to understand how emergent second language readers use visuals to build on their second language literacy. A close look at emergent second language readers' development of visual literacy through the use of picture books may bring teachers and parents to a better understanding of how diverse the literacy foundations are from child to child. This understanding is hoped to generate better ways of developing second language literacy programs for Malaysian young learners.

Significance of the Study

Children will succeed if we can only tune into the ways they are seeing and doing things at some particular point in their progress towards literacy (Berger, 2005). In order to do this, teachers need to be careful observers of children's interactions when they are engaged in literacy tasks during the early years of school (Clay, 1991).

At the early stage of learning to read, a lot of books consist of only pictures or combinations of pictures and texts, namely picture books. Many believe that learning to read starts with learning to decode print, but studies have shown that the process of reading has started much earlier than this stage; in fact it begins the moment the child starts to "read" the visual images in the books without the aid of texts. It is believed that

at about 12 months of age, children can read graphic imagery with some accuracy. They know, for example, that a photograph of an apple equates to a real apple. From about 3 years of age, they become deliberate producers of visual imagery and understand that graphic forms can be used to communicate. For example, the picture of Daddy with an angry face show I am unhappy with Daddy. By 3 years of age, most children can use visual symbols to denote things. Bamford (2003) advocates that children need to become efficient readers of images by acquiring visual literacy in a process of visual communication and eventually make judgments of the accuracy, validity, and value of images. Through various stages of growth, the child's visual perception that changes and corrects itself has an impact on processing information related to symbols such as mathematical learning and language.

Many studies have shown that children read images differently from words, and reading comprehension does not necessarily start with words (Paivio, 1979; Soundy & Yun, 2006/2007; Wood, 2005). In reading, children not only read words but they also read images and it is assumed that this kind of reading requires different processing and understanding. In reading picture books, two types of input – visual and written – are processed by the reader and while many studies have looked at the reading process of reading written text, few have dealt with the processes that take place when one transacts with visual and written input simultaneously. In addition, evidence is especially lacking in looking at emergent second language readers' development of visual literacy in the context of reading picture books.

Thus, it is hoped that, from this study, better descriptions and better understanding of children's literacy processes and visual literacy development could be gained. In addition, this study also hopes to better understand the meaning-making process that children engage themselves in when transacting with picture books. From this, it is hoped that we can better comprehend the cognitive processes involved in reading images and texts in the context of reading acquisition. It is hoped that results from this study would add to our growing understanding of different paths to second language literacy and to acknowledge the notion that there may be different, but equally effective, routes to second language literacy.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to better understand emergent second language readers' development of visual literacy. It takes an in-depth look at the meaning-making process that children engage in when transacting with picture books. From this understanding, it is hoped that a more effective and flexible literacy program can be developed for young children in schools.
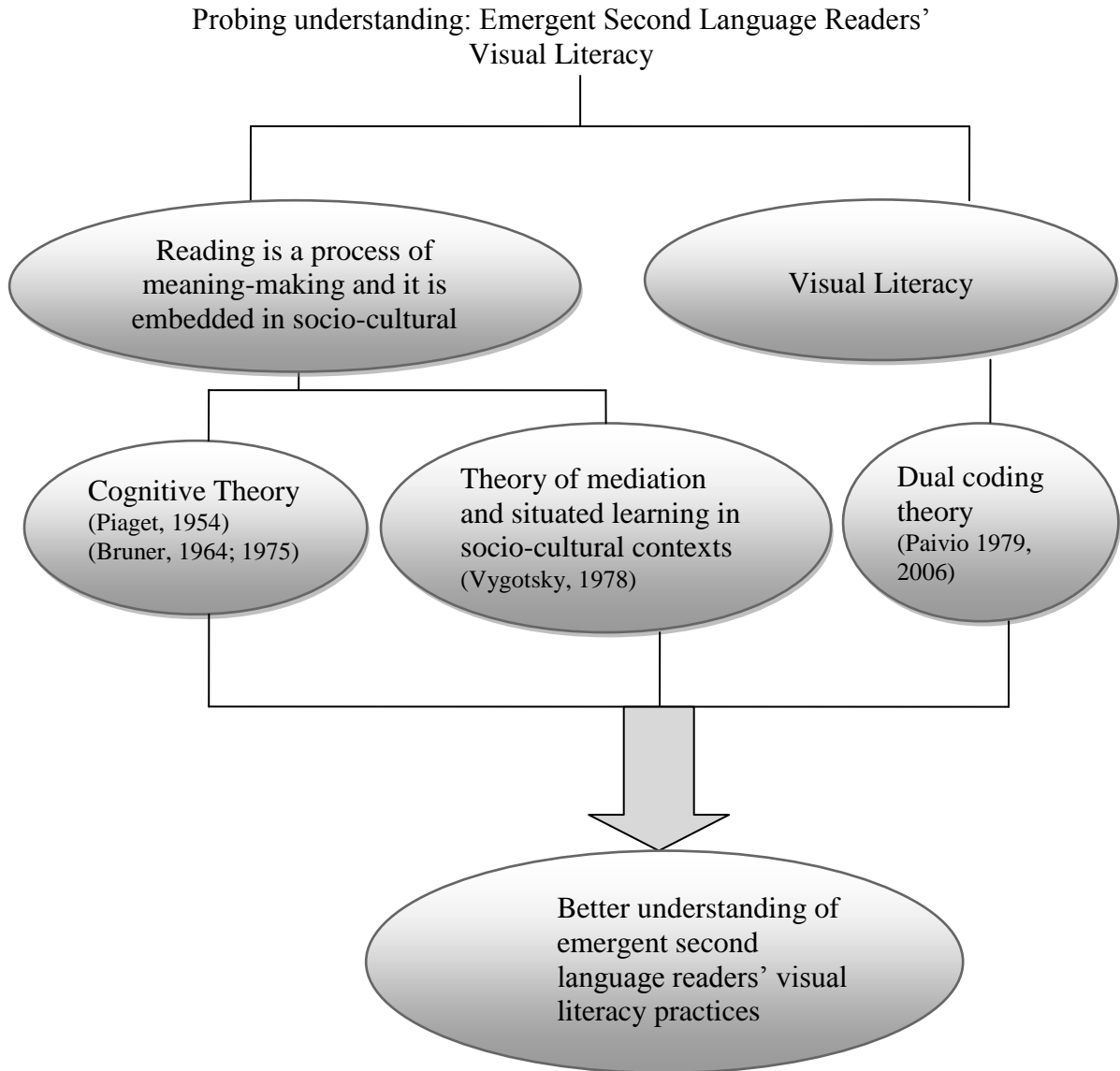
Research Questions

This study bears the following two main research questions:

1. How do emergent second language readers use visuals to build on their second language literacy?

2. How do social and cultural contexts shape emergent second language readers' visual literacy?

Theoretical Framework

This study stands on the theoretical basis that children are active constructers of their own meaning in which children are central in the meaning making process, and the reading of picture books has the potential of engaging emergent second language readers in meaningful and independent reading. The reading of picture books is assumed to activate two different kinds of cognitive processes which are visual (imagery) and verbal processes. These two processes inevitably will lead to not only the development of literacy but also visual literacy among emergent second language readers. In addition, it is also assumed that in any forms of literacy, it is not a process that occurs in an individual only but it is very much embedded in the social and cultural context. Hence, the theoretical framework of this study will stand on Piaget's and Bruner's theory of cognitive development, Paivio's (1979) dual coding theory, as well as Vygotsky's (1978) theory of mediation and situated learning in socio-cultural contexts. Although these theories originate from three different areas, all are putting cognitive processing at the core of the learning process. The merging of these theories enables the study to be grounded in a theoretical framework that helps the researcher to better understand the case being studied. The theoretical framework of this study is summarized in Figure 1.1 and following this is a detailed description of the theories mentioned.

Probing understanding: Emergent Second Language Readers'
Visual Literacy

Reading is a process of meaning-making and it is embedded in socio-cultural

Visual Literacy

Cognitive Theory
(Piaget, 1954)
(Bruner, 1964; 1975)

Theory of mediation and situated learning in socio-cultural contexts
(Vygotsky, 1978)

Dual coding theory
(Paivio 1979, 2006)

Better understanding of emergent second language readers' visual literacy practices

Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework of the Study.

Cognitive Development

In recent years great interest has been shown in children as cognitive beings, children who selectively attend to aspects of their environments seeing, searching, remembering, monitoring, correcting, validating and problem solving – activities which build cognitive competencies (Berger, 2005; Clay, 1991; Whitmore et al., 2005). Kress (1997) described children's cognitive disposition as "one that sees the connections of all parts of the semiotic world" (p. 142) that are less accessible in the typically minimalist, segmented, and verbocentric lessons of school. He further stated that two- and three-dimensional objects and color carry young children's meanings more effectively than language can.

Piaget's (1954) study on children's cognitive development shows that children live in a world that is completely different from adults, and sometimes quite incomprehensible. Thus, Piaget did not believe everything that the children do is as a result of pure imitation from adults. Piaget believed that children construct their own meaning and understanding as they interact with the environment. Children, according to Piaget, are constantly trying to reach "equilibration", the state where the child's mind seeks equilibrium between what is understood and what is experienced in the environment. When the child experiences disturbed equilibrium or 'cognitive conflict', he or she will set out in search of an answer which will enable him or her reaching a new higher equilibrium. Piaget's theory of cognitive development also allows us to understand the process of appropriating knowledge involved in learning to read and write. Piaget believed that new knowledge is not automatically transmitted to the child;

rather the child reconstructs this new knowledge based on an existing schema. In the domain of cognitive activity, "appropriation" is an active process of reconstruction carried out by children. Thus, Piaget held that children must be allowed to do their own learning and this can be greatly enhanced if they are provided with enriched experience at the sensory-motor level instead of accelerated learning brought about by what he termed as the "pedagogical mania" of adults (Piaget, 1954).

Piaget suggested that "readiness" is an important element in cognitive development and that all new stages must wait for the appropriate mental structures to develop and mature (Piaget, 1954). This is the opposite of Bruner's belief that any "subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (Bruner, 1975, p. 33). Through his study of human evolution, Bruner proposed that humans go through three modes of representation — enactive representation, iconic representation and symbolic representation — in order to make sense of the world. Enactive representation refers to "a mode of representing past event through appropriate motor responses" (Bruner, 1964, p. 2). In this mode of representation, some information is only understood through action or motor acts. Young children for instance may not be able to describe to you how to find the toilet in their home but will be able to take you to the toilet. In iconic representation, the perceiver is "able to summarize events by the selective organization of percepts and images, by the spatial, temporal, and qualitative structures of the perceptual field and their transformed images" (Bruner, 1964, p. 2). A child who is able to draw a map showing the route from her house to the shop is showing her understanding of the route through iconic mode.

Symbolic representation on the other hand, comes about with the acquisition of "a symbol system that represents things by design features that include remoteness and arbitrariness" (Bruner, 1964, p. 2). Understanding of concepts or experience through language is an example of symbolic representation. Bruner believed that "the usual course of intellectual development moves from enactive through iconic to symbolic representation of the world, and that this development is not linear in nature and one could go back in forth from symbolic representation to iconic or enactive representation" (Bruner, 1966, p. 49).

Nevertheless both Piaget's and Bruner's theory of cognitive development are similar in some ways. Firstly, both are strong advocates of allowing children to do their own learning and if any learning is to take form, it has to be the result of the child's own transformation of that new knowledge. Bruner suggested that there is great importance in developing "hunches", "shrewd guesses", and "fertile hypotheses" in children (Bruner, 1975, p. 14). He believed that children who are allowed to make their own guesses and later by themselves prove or disprove these guesses are able to learn things better and can be better learners, and thus came the term "discovery learning" (Bruner, 1975). Bruner felt that teachers must go beyond just presenting the fundamental ideas; they need to develop a sense of excitement about discovery. Bruner's idea of discovery is not just restricted to finding out something unknown to mankind before, but rather it includes "all forms of obtaining knowledge for oneself by the use of one's own mind" (Bruner, 1974, p. 402). He further explained this discovery as "discovery of regularities of previously unrecognized relations and similarities between ideas, with a resulting sense of self-

confidence in one's abilities" (Bruner, 1975, p. 20). Bruner believed that the process of discovery contributes significantly to intellectual development and that the heuristics of discovery can only be learned through the exercise of problem solving and thus proposed discovery learning as a pedagogic strategy (cited in Driscoll, 2000). Bruner also stressed the importance of previous knowledge in discovery learning and that the focus of the learning should be the process of relating what the children know (their previous knowledge) to the new knowledge. Bruner emphasized that "discovery teaching generally involves not so much the process of leading students to discover what is 'out there' rather, their discovery of what is in their own heads" (as cited in Driscoll, 2000, p. 230).

Discovery learning also enables children to develop interest in learning and this interest sparks not from external rewards but from the act of discovery itself (Bruner, 1974). Bruner noted that learning resulting from responding to rewards of parental or teacher approval or avoidance of failure can too readily develop a "pattern in which the child is seeking cues as to how to conform to what is expected of him" (p. 406). Learning of this kind does not enable children to transform their learning into their own "thought structures" (p. 406). What this does to the child later is that he develops rote abilities and depends very much upon being able to give back of what is expected of him instead of developing his own understanding that he can relate to "the rest of his cognitive life" (p. 406). In other words, this child's learning is not his own learning and the lack of autonomy in learning does not generate interest and autonomy in thinking.

Dual-coding Theory

Cognition according to the Dual Coding Theory (DCT) involves the activity of two distinct subsystems, a verbal system specialized for dealing directly with language and a nonverbal (imagery) system specialized for dealing with nonlinguistic objects and events (Paivio, 1979, 2006). This theory assumes that both systems are generally involved even in language acquisition. The verbal system dominates in some tasks while the nonverbal imagery system dominates in others. Cognition is achieved through this variable pattern of the interplay in the two systems according to the degree to which they have developed. Cognitive growth in DCT is described as a bootstrapping process in which dual coding systems pull themselves upward using their own resources, thus constituting an increasingly complex and powerful feed-forward system. This concept is reflected in Piaget's concept of assimilation and accommodation of new information with schemata.

The important practical aspect of the DCT developmental analysis is its stress on the early development of the nonverbal system as the foundation for later cognitive skills that include language as well. In the context of reading, this theory implies that beginning readers learn to read concrete words by sight much faster when words are accompanied by referent pictures than when paired only with pronunciations. In addition, instructing learners to form images during reading further enhances reading comprehension and vocabulary learning. Combining pictures, mental imagery, and verbal elaboration is believed to be an effective method in promoting understanding and learning from text by students ranging from grade school to university level (Paivio, 2006).

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Dual coding principles have also been used in remedial education for learning and reading difficulties. Traditionally, remediation of reading difficulties has focused on decoding because it is believed that readers must recognize printed words before they can get meaning. As a result of this, decoding ability is measured by tests that require reading words or naming letters aloud. However, decoding and comprehension are not highly correlated. Based on dual coding principles, comprehension is taught through a program of visualizing and verbalizing. Instructional methods include progressive buildup of imagery to larger and larger text segments – words, phrases, sentences, texts – with learners being encouraged to describe their images in increasing detail. Higher order comprehension involved in inference, prediction, and evaluation is dealt with through imagination and verbal elaboration

Theory of Mediation and Situated Learning in Sociocultural Contexts

Vygotsky (1978) believed that within a general process of development, two qualitatively different lines of development, differing in origin, can be distinguished: the elementary processes, which are of biological origin on the one hand, and the higher psychological functions, of sociocultural origin, on the other. The history of child behavior is believed to reflect the interweaving of these two lines.

To Vygotsky, speech is central in a child's psychological development. He postulated that there exists a strong link between language and perception, and that even at very early stages of development, language and perception are linked and this link is very much influenced by social and cultural context. He further explained this by

highlighting the special feature of human perception is that humans do not simply see the world as in color and shape but also as world with sense and meaning. This sense or meaning making process is very much embedded in the social and cultural context. For instance, in his study, he asked children to recall words with the help of pictures, one child selected a picture of an "onion" to recall the word "dinner" because according to her, "I eat an onion" during dinner. This study has highlighted two important points; one is the importance of visual in aiding the development of language and literacy, and another the strong sociocultural influence on the child's meaning-making process.

Vygotsky's observation of young children has led him to conclude that children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as their eyes and hands. This unity of perception, speech and action is one that ultimately produces internalization of the visual field. This unity according to Vygotsky is the central subject matter for any analysis of human behavior and the process of meaning-making, and he believed that "it is impossible for very young children to separate the field of meaning from the visual field because there is such intimate fusion between meaning and what is seen" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 97). He also emphasized that speech and action are very much embedded in social context as from the very first days of the child's development activities acquire a meaning of their own in a system of social behavior. Vygotsky further explained that the path from object to child and child to object passes through another person, and this complex human structure is the product of a developmental process deeply rooted in the links between the individual and social history.

Vygotsky's work has led to the understanding that literacy is a social practice. This results in linking the activities of reading and writing with social structures in which they are embedded. It has also led to the understanding that the literacy process is not an individual process but a process by "which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). In this context, literacy practices are seen as culturally constructed, and Vygotsky believed that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice, on two levels; first, between people as an interpsychological category, and then inside the child, as an intrapsychological category. In short, though children's literacy practices are very much influenced by sociocultural context, they are active participants in their own learning; they will internalize their own meaning within their social and cultural context.

Limitations of the Study

The implementation of this study bears several limitations. First, this study used only four types of picture book: printed picture book which consists of illustrations and text; printed wordless picture book which consists of only illustrations; comic which consists of illustrations and speech bubbles; and online picture books. This study did not look at other types of picture books that might be available. The picture books used in this study are written by different writers and no two similar writers are used. In addition, this study only looked at the use of English picture books (referring to printed picture books, comics and online picture books) and not picture books of other languages or dual languages.

The second limitation of this study is that it only looked at the use of picture books on students from the national type primary school and did not look at other types of schools. In addition, the participants of this study only consisted of emergent second language readers and not other types of readers.

Definition of Terms

The terms which are used in this study are defined as the following:

Picture books

In this study, four types of picture books were used; printed picture books, printed wordless picture books, comics, and online picture books.

Printed picture books are children's picture books which consist of illustrations and text, and the story in picture books is usually told by both text and illustrations. Picture books of this nature are usually written for young readers who are not able to read yet or just about to read (Bromley, 1992; Lewis, 2001).

Printed wordless picture books are children's picture books which consist of only illustrations and the content of this type of picture books must be communicated solely through the use of illustrations. Wordless picture books provide a basis on which storytakers and storymakers can construct meaning and build their own narratives (Crawford & Hade, 2000).

Comics are books which consist of "narratives told by a sequence of pictures, with the dialogue of the characters incorporated into the pictures in the form of speech balloons" (Harvey, 1996, p.3). In this context, the pictures do not merely illustrate the

characters and events in a story, the pictures also play a significant role in adding meaning to a story (Harvey, 1996; McCloud, 1994).

Online picture books are picture books which are published and made available online. These picture books consist of images and text and at times animation. For the purpose of this study the online picture books from the Children's Literature Development's (ChiLD) website will be used (http://projectchild.net). This website has compiled and categorized stories for children according to six levels and made them available online.

Emergent Readers

Emergent readers are readers who are just beginning to read. They are at the stage where they are developing background knowledge and schema, which prepares them for learning how to read; in other words they have varying knowledge of the alphabet, recognize few if any words at sight, and are not able to consistently match speech and print (Bromley, 1992; Clay, 1991; Wood, 2005). In Malaysia, the term emergent reader is used in reference to children from birth to age nine (International Reports on Literacy Research, 2006). For this study the emergent readers are students of Year 1 with age ranging from six to seven years old.

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development results from the ability of learners to appropriate new knowledge to their cognitive structures through the process of assimilation and accommodation. The new knowledge is first taken in through the process of assimilation

and later the learners will try to accommodate this new knowledge to their existing knowledge. The result of these two simultaneous processes is transformation of new knowledge. In this act of transformation, the individuals give interpretation to the new knowledge, and only by virtue of this interpretation is the new knowledge internalized into the learner's cognitive structures (Bruner, 1975).

Visual Literacy

Visual literacy can be defined as the ability to communicate through visual images (Riesland, 2005). A visually literate person should be able to read and write visual language. This includes the ability to successfully decode and interpret visual messages and to encode and compose meaningful visual communication (Bamford, 2003).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study looks at how emergent second language readers make sense of visual and written inputs in picture books. This study also seeks to better understand emergent second language readers' development of visual literacy in the context of reading picture books. Thus this chapter looks at related studies on how children make sense of text with visual and written input under the understanding that in reading, children are actively constructing their own meaning and the process of meaning-making is very much embedded in social and cultural contexts. It also looks at related studies on visual literacy in relation to second language readers and picture books.

Children's Cognitive Development

It has been widely accepted that there is a strong association between understandings about children's cognitive development and early years teaching (Bruner, 1975; Clay, 1991; Driscoll, 2000; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1983; Pulaski, 1971; Whitebread, 2002; Whitehead, 1997). Studies on cognitive development of children have shown that children play an active role in knowledge acquisition and that they construct their own understanding of the new knowledge (Bruner, 1975; Piaget, 1954). Learning therefore, involves more than memorization of facts or the acquisition of certain skills; it includes the use of higher level thinking skills, such as making connections, comparing,

decision making, and problem-solving (Berger, 2005). Heller's (2006) observation of children's interaction with their teachers while reading illustrates the complexity of a child's cognition during the process of constructing meaning.

"Literacy is not handed down to children but they uniquely construct and refine their literacy through active interpretation and purposeful sense making" (Whitmore et al., 2004, p. 294). Piaget's (1954) work has brought us to the attention of the child's active role in learning, and the importance of mental activity. Piaget shows how children actively attempt to make sense of their world and construct their own understanding. Piaget believed that when a child encountered new knowledge, this new knowledge is not automatically transmitted to the child; rather, the child reconstructs this new knowledge based on an existing schema. This active process of reconstruction of new knowledge is termed by Piaget as "appropriation" and "knowledge is not truly appropriated until its means of production has been understood, until it has been internally reconstructed" (as cited in Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1983, p. 279). Piaget insists that children must be allowed to do their own learning and should be provided with enriched experience at the sensory-motor level instead of accelerated learning brought about by what he termed the "pedagogical mania" of adults. Piaget believed the best way of teaching is to have the children discover or invent ways of dealing with objects themselves and Piaget stressed that knowledge is derived from action; to know an object is to act upon it and to transform it.

Piaget, with his fixed idea of stages, believed that a child progresses from one stage to the other; hence "readiness" is an important element in cognitive development and "all new stages must wait for the appropriate mental structures to develop and mature" (as cited in Whitehead, 1997, p. 58). Bruner on the other hand disagrees with Piaget's concept of "readiness". He suggested that any "subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (Bruner, 1975, p. 33). Bruner further explained that children having encountered a set of ideas at a practical level when they are young will use this knowledge to help them understand the same ideas at a more symbolic or abstract level when they are older. Thus learning is viewed as a spiral movement in which the same point is returned to and revised but each time at a higher and deeper level (Bruner, 1975).

Nevertheless, both Piaget's and Bruner's theory of cognitive development are similar in some ways. Firstly, both are strong advocates of allowing children to do their own transformation of the new knowledge. Bruner also believed that children should be allowed to do their own learning and if any learning is to take form, it has to be the result of the child's own transformation of that new knowledge. Bruner placed great importance in developing 'hunches', 'shrewd guesses', 'fertile hypotheses' in children (Bruner, 1975, p. 14). He believed that children who are allowed to make their own guesses and later prove or disprove these guesses are able to learn things better and can be better learners. Bruner felt that the lack of autonomy in learning does not generate interest and independent thinking.

Autonomy in learning is another aspect which has been given great focus in studies related to children's cognitive development. By being actively involved in learning, children will feel that they are in control of their own learning. This feeling of empowerment is fundamental to children in developing positive attitudes about themselves, and particularly to themselves as learners (Whitebread, 2002). Whitebread further explained this by stating that when children feel that their performance is determined by factors within their control, they will respond positively to failure and try harder next time, believing all the time in their own ability to be successful on the task. On the other hand, when they feel their performance is determined by factors outside their control, they will respond negatively to failure and give up, believing they will not succeed however much they try. This can be damaging to children's development as learners as it will result in the feeling of poor self-esteem which may induce lack of motivation, which in turn leads to lack of effort and consequently poor performance. The failing child thus becomes locked into what Whitebread termed a destructive self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, it is vital for adults working with young children to give them the feeling of being in control – especially inner control – of their learning.

Literacy and Construction of Inner Control

Clay's understanding of how children learn to read and write is very much underscored by Bruner's and Piaget's theory of cognitive development. She believed that the most important aspect in a child's literacy development is the feeling of being in control (Clay, 1998, 1991). Clay stressed that being able to read is a result of inner control and we need to develop or construct this inner control in children so that they are

able to have some form of independence and confidence in their reading (Clay, 1991). She later explained that in teaching children to read, it is extremely important to let the children lead. Just as Piaget believed that learning should not be brought about by "pedagogical mania" of adults, Clay also felt that over-instruction is very detrimental to the child's progress in reading as it kills the child's curiosity and interest. Cashden (1976) felt that one needed to give children the freedom to explore and to learn on their own and that the children are self-stimulating and self-starting provided the conditions are right for them. Bruner (1975) also stressed on providing the right conditions and contexts in learning. He believed that any children can be taught anything at any level if the right contexts and conditions are provided by the teachers. Clay (1991) believed that this can be achieved by having the teacher provide temporary scaffolds and support systems where, in the child's process of learning, the adult supports, encourages, and extends the child's own active search for understanding. One of the ways of providing scaffolding to students in their reading is through the teachers' interaction with the students while the students are engaged in literary activities.

Literacy and Socio-cultural Contexts

Vygotsky (1978) in his study of human behavior was interested in one fundamental issue and that was: What is the relation between human beings and their environment, both physical and social? Vygotsky refused to accept the concept of maturation as a passive process and believed that this process is highly influenced by a person's environment, specifically, other people in the person's environment. Vygotsky dismissed earlier conclusions made on human's psychological development based on

studies conducted on animals as he noted that the motives guiding the animal and those guiding the child to achieve mastery of a goal were different. Vygotsky believed that animals' motives are primarily guided by their instinct while for children this became secondary. From his study on children, he concluded that children are predominantly guided by socially rooted motives.

With the above understanding, Vygotsky deduced that within a general process of a child's development, two different elements can be distinguished: the elementary processes, which are of biological origin on the one hand, and the higher psychological functions, of sociocultural origin, on the other. He believed that the history of a child's behavior is a result of the interlacing of these two elements. Because Vygotsky emphasized the sociocultural origin of a child's development, he paid great attention to a child's development of speech believing that the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development occurs when a merger takes place between speech and practical intelligence. Vygotsky classified speech into two types; the egocentric speech and the social speech. Egocentric speech is the speech that children use as plans to solve a given problem while social speech is when children turn to adults for help when they are unable to solve the problem. These two types of speech are not entirely two separate entities, rather egocentric speech is linked to children's social speech by many transitional forms, one of which is when they are unable to solve problems by themselves and they turn to an adult, and verbally describe the method that they cannot carry out by themselves. According to Vygotsky, the most significant change in children's ability to use language as a problem-solving tool takes place somewhat later in their development,

when socialized speech (which initially has been used to address an adult) is turned inward. In this context, instead of appealing to adults to solve the problem, children appeal to themselves: language thus takes on an intrapersonal function in addition to its interpersonal use. Vygotsky believed that children have succeeded in applying a social attitude to themselves when they develop a method of behavior for guiding themselves that had previously been used in relation to another person and when they organize their own activities according to a social form of behavior. The history of process of the internalization of social speech is also the history of the socialization of children's practical intellect.

Vygotsky's work has led to the understanding that literacy is very much a social practice highly influenced by social and cultural diversity (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Rogers & Schofield, 2005; Sim, Wyatt-Smith, & Dempster, 2002). Barton and Hamilton (2000, p. 8) listed a set of six propositions about the nature of literacy in their discussion on theory of literacy as social practice. These six propositions are: 1) literacy is best understood as a set of social practices – these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts; 2) there are different literacies associated with different domains of life; 3) literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others; 4) literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices; 5) literacy is historically situated; 6) literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

From these six propositions, Barton and Hamilton (2000) highlighted some important aspects in looking at literacy as a set of social practices. Firstly, when looking at literacy as a set of social practices, the term literacy event is very much connected in this context. Literacy events are activities where literacy has a role, and usually there is a written text, or texts central to the activity and there may be talk around the texts. Events are considered as observable occurrences which stem from practices and are shaped by them. The notion of events stresses the nature of literacy -- that it always exists in a social context. These three components, practices, events and texts, provide the first proposition of a social theory of literacy which is literacy is best understood as a set of social practices – these are observable in events which are mediated by written texts. In this social theory of literacy, one is able to better understand what people do with texts and what these activities mean to them. It is important to note that written texts here, according to Barton and Hamilton (2000), are not limited to texts with words only but they include a range of semiotic systems; these semiotic systems include mathematical systems, musical notations, maps and other non-text based images.

Secondly, children are active constructors of meaning, and in whatever they do, they do not passively react to their environment, they want to create meaning out of it. Thus reading and writing activities must give a sense of meaning to the children. Whilst some reading and writing is carried out as an end in itself, typically literacy is a means to some other end. Literacy practices thus are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices. Any study of literacy practices must therefore situate reading and writing activities in these broader contexts and motivations for use.

Thirdly, because literary practices are culturally constructed they have their roots in the past. Literacy practices are seen as historically situated as literacy practices are as fluid, dynamic and changing as the lives and societies of which they are a part. We need a historical approach for an understanding of the ideology, culture and traditions on which current literacy practices are based. A person's practices can also be located in their own history of literacy. In order to understand this we need to take a life history approach, observing the history within the person's life, understanding the person's past engagement with literacy practices as well as their interests. This belief is also affirmed by Rogers and Schofield (2005) where they assert that the texts used in daily life have meanings which depend upon the practices of people's lives and how the texts are used.

Lastly, Barton and Hamilton (2000) believed that any theory of literacy implies the theory of learning. In this context, in order to understand situated literacy, one also needs to understand the nature of situated cognition. The work of Vygotsky (1978) has shed much understanding on this as he saw learning as taking place in particular social contexts and part of this learning is the internalization of social processes. From this understanding also, Vygotsky (1978) believed that one child's behavior development is not always similar to the other and stresses not on the development of the mass but maximizing the potential of individual children. The diversity in social and cultural practices also reflects that the path to literacy is not a single one, and that there are several paths to achieving a common goal (Clay, 1991).

Multiliteracies and Second Language Contexts

The term 'multiliteracies' refers to "new ways of reading and writing that involve a mixture of modalities, symbol systems, and languages" (Matsuda et al., 2003, p.155). Studies on multiliteracies in the second language contexts have focused both on the learners and the teachers. Lam (2000) in her case study of a Chinese student in California documented how this student who did not have the confidence to converse in English in class was able to develop proficiency to communicate in English through multiliterate communication outside the classroom. This study shows how multiliteracies were able to engage the student in second language learning more effectively as compared to traditional classroom literacy. Stein and Newfield (2004) in their study on South African school children noted that visual texts were critical in communicating narratives of self and context with people from different parts of the world. These visual texts became sources of much needed information in understanding one's culture and life. This study demonstrates how through the use of multiple modes of representation of self, children from different backgrounds are finding ways to communicate.

Literacy in second language learning now is no longer limited to the ability to read and write in the second language. In most second language classrooms, textual, visual, oral/aural modes of presentation support and reinforce each other (Harklau, 2002). In this context, students and teachers "communicate through the constant coordination and orchestration of multiple modalities" (Harklau, 2002, p. 336). This reflects the notion of multimodal communication becoming increasingly prevalent in the context of second language learning.

Reading and Interaction

Clay (1998) believed that there are important links between language, conversation, and thought. Hence it is essential that teachers encourage oral interaction surrounding the comprehension and composing processes as oral language is the foundation of literacy (Heller, 2006). As children hear or read a story, they have some comprehension of it but as they talk or write about it, they are composing ideas about the story (Bromley, 1992). Composition can help enhance comprehension, just as comprehension can aid composition. As children talk about what they have read and as they listen to others talk, their understanding of what they have read can change and become meaningful. In short, as children interact, they respond, and as they respond, they interact (Bromley, 1992).

In order for the children to develop deeper understanding of the picture books that they are reading and to express their views and ideas on the books, it is important for interaction to take place between the child and the adult. Talk surrounding small-group reading instruction gives voice to children's thought processes, which in turn enables teachers to assess and responsively assist student performance within individual zones of proximal development (Estrada, as cited in Heller, 2006). Clay (1998) posited that almost any adult can talk with children in ways that teach and as a teacher one needs to observe, listen to, and tune in to a learner. This, according to Bromley (1992), is achieved by a combination of teacher questioning and, most importantly, providing the opportunity for the children to ask their own questions. Questioning while reading is a metacognitive strategy that indicates thoughtful reflections among emergent readers (Heller, 2006).

Clay (1998) believed that children need to ask their questions, to explain things to other children, and to negotiate meanings between themselves and other children, and between themselves and adults. Being sensitive to the learner's thinking allows the teacher to draw the child's attention to things overlooked, to new aspects of the task, or to other possible interpretations. The most common error probably made by adults about the learning of young children is that we tend to bypass what the child is thinking and just push new knowledge into the child and we often assume that knowledge out here gets put inside their heads by means of the things we do. However, any learning situation according to Clay is like a conversation, for it requires the learner to bring what he or she already knows to bear on the new problem being explored. If a teacher ignores the child's meaning, thinking and understanding, she will lose the child. Thus, talk is central to this activity and through this social interaction, scaffolding can take place as at this point of time, the children are working in their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Alongside a more experienced reader and the child's own knowledge, learning potential will only become apparent if the child is allowed to explore his knowledge through conversation. Self-esteem and confidence is built up this way, as well as there being room for errors to be made, without the ever watchful eye of an adult (Bromley, 1992).

Reading and Writing

Although reading and writing are two different skills they are not isolated from one to the other. Studies on early literacy of first language and second language learners have shown a strong connection between reading and writing in the development of early literacy (Clay, 1998, 1991; Hudelson, 1994). In fact, the first exploration of print may

occur in writing rather than in print (Clay, 1993). This can be seen in the child's attempt to scribble first before any attempt is made to read. This scribbling could be the result of the child imitating the parents' writing or other forms of writing which he encounters in his environment. Baghban and Weaver (as cited in Hudelson, 1994) believed that by the age of three, most children will be able to distinguish between writing and drawing as two different symbols for expressing one's meaning. Hudelson (1994) emphasized that the "core of literacy is the construction of meaning, either through the creation of one's own text, or the interpretation of text created by others" (p. 151).

Clay (1998) suggested that "writing can contribute to the building of almost every kind of inner control of literacy learning that is needed by successful reader" (p. 130). Clay criticized school practice where the teacher's emphasis tends to be either on writing or reading; instead one should focus on what one activity can do for the other, that is, their "reciprocity" (p. 132). She believed these reciprocal gains can come in two ways. First, in her studies of recording children drawing pictures and writing about the pictures, she found that when children were rereading their writing, their understanding of the new language symbol system was further developed. In this instance, writing fosters slow analysis of print. Writing words forces attention to detail which according to Clay could easily be overlooked by the quick visual perception of a word that is read. In writing, the attention is directed by the act of producing letter forms and sequences. The slow production of writing provides the young learner with time and opportunity to observe visual things about printed language that were not previously noticed, and to observe organizational and sequential features of printed language. This could be critical

experience at a time when learners are constructing fundamental and fast visual perception processes for recognizing print forms. Hudelson (1994) held that through the children's own writing they figured out sound-letter correspondences and applied this in both their own texts and when reading texts by others. Thus, "early writing was seen as an opportunity for reading and it was not secondary to reading or done in the service of reading or to be learned after reading, one activity provided a context for the other" (Clay, 1998, p. 136).

Reciprocal gains from reading and writing could also come in a form of support system one gave to the other. Clay's (1998) clinical experience of teaching children who were having extreme difficulty learning to read found that "children with limited control in writing and in reading have more responses to work with if they can be encouraged to search for information in the knowledge they already have in either reading or writing" (p. 136). Thus, when a teacher helps the learner to use either activity to support the other, establishing reciprocity between these two ways of learning about the printed word, the learner's literacy repertoire is enlarged. The child also can gain a sense that knowledge can flow in either direction, from writing to reading or from reading to writing. The result of this is "two meager bodies of tentative knowledge can combine as a larger resource for problem-solving" (p. 137). Clay elaborated that "dipping into a large pool of both reading and writing knowledge will help those with limited knowledge of the language, and may have cognitive advantages" (p. 139). From these aspects, it could be seen that writing is an important component in developing early literacy not only among first language readers but also among second language readers (Hudelson, 1994).

Reading and Drawing

Young children use meaning-making systems that are not necessarily expressed as words (Berger, 2005). Most children are drawing and writing before they are reading. Similar to writing, drawing is a form of comprehension and expression (Hudelson, 1994). Drawing is the construction of meaning just as reading and writing where it requires the child to bring other knowledge to bear on the new task (Clay, 1998). Clay argues that if we want children to develop a constructive mode of thinking where they are able to link the given task with personal knowledge, then any competence the child has should be allowed to contribute and this need not necessarily be confined to reading and writing. Arizpe and Styles (2003), for example, found that drawings of younger children often showed "understandings they were unable to articulate" (p. 225). In their study of children's responses to picture books they found that "children's drawings communicated the children's knowledge and emotional responses to picture books and revealed understandings that the children were unable to express verbally" (p. 225). For most children, drawing and writing are parts of a communication system that work together to convey meaning and emotion (Galda & Cullinan, 2006). It is believed that visualizing and visually representing support literacy learning, as children become proficient readers and writers (Heller, 2006). Kendrick and Mackay (2004) demonstrated in their study how children successfully used drawing as a medium to express their knowledge and theories about the meanings of literacy.

Children's very early reading behaviors can be observed best by their teachers in relation to their drawings and early writing. If one traces progression in children's

drawing, there exists a relationship between children's progression in drawing and reading progress (Clay, 1991). Drawing is one way of expressing ideas in two-dimensional space, and children are easily led to this. Drawings are also seen as aids to memory, allowing children to hold the ideas in their mind before producing them in sentences (Clay, 1998).

Holdaway (1979) linked talking, reading, writing, thinking, drawing, and "making activities" in terms of a semantic drive. He believed that if a child is encouraged to express his ideas in drawing in words through modeling by the teachers, the process of discovering the correlation between ideas in the drawing, the messages dictated and the rules of the written language can take place. In short, at this early stage, children have four ways of analyzing a single message they have in mind – by drawing, saying, scanning and tracing or writing. The action sequence has been: ideas, drawing, telling or dictating, teacher writing, child copying or writing involving some further analyzing (Clay, 1991).

We express meanings in speech, in writing, and in constructing and we interpret meanings in speech, in reading, and in art. Children's ability to integrate remembering ideas, re-telling them, finding them in print and moving correctly across the print is the heart of early reading success (Clay, 1991). The teacher's goal in many classroom activities is to have children link what they are reading or writing to what they already know, within and beyond the subject studies. Opportunities to operate in the constructive mode can spread widely across the curriculum, and especially into art, craft, and other

visual presentations (Clay, 1998). For many children, an internal dialogue is often going on in relation to the image-making process. Soundy and Yun (2006/2007) reported that children's pictorial representation demonstrates a clear example of a child's natural ability to combine visual, verbal, and even auditory skills.

Reading and Picture Books

Although most books have always been illustrated, the special form of text that we now call the picture book is a relatively recent invention. Picture books began to appear towards the end of the nineteenth century and it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that the picture book was fully formed (Lewis, 2001).

The term "picture book" is commonly used to "describe a book that tells a story through both text and illustrations" (Bromley, 1992, p. 44). Galda and Cullinan (2006) state that the illustrations in picture books are as important as the text in creating meaning and at times they are even more important. Lewis (2001) in his attempt to explain picture books stated that in picture books:

> words are never just words, they are always words-as-influenced-by-pictures. Similarly, the pictures are never just pictures, they are pictures-as-influenced by words. Thus words on their own are always partial, incomplete, unfinished, awaiting the flesh of pictures. Similarly the pictures are perpetually pregnant with potential narrative meaning, indeterminate, unfinished, awaiting the closure provided by the words. (p. 74)

The inclusion of illustrations in text is believed to help develop the students' cognitive and creative development as well as their understanding of abstract concept in texts (Lewis, 2001; Mallan, 1999; Nicholas, 2007). Soundy and Yun (2006/2007) believed that the benefits to be gained from viewing picture books stem from the child's natural capacity for understanding both literacy and artistic elements, and from the imaginative

skills that interact to produce a superior kind of mental activity. In their study of American and Chinese children exploring literacy through visual arts, they found that picture books have the potential to stimulate children's auditory memory, visual acuity and imagination. Similarly, Nicholas (2007) found that it takes more than just looking at the text as one reads in order for young children to expand their cognitive and creative development. The inclusion of illustrations in texts helps children to understand abstract concepts as a child's perception of ideas can be "radically enriched by a visual example and this understanding leads to excellence in perceptual thinking" (Arnheim, 1993, p. 94). Mallan (1999) observed that picture books have the potential to stimulate inquiry into their content and form which may result in the readers making a series of intellectual, emotional and perceptual shifts. In addition, picture books have always required readers to fill in gaps and generate predictions on multiple levels, as readers move back and forth between text and illustrations (Iser, 1978). Encouraging the children to look beyond the text is especially exciting, as even with numerous readings of the same text, children somehow still find something new in the illustrations (Bromley, 1992). As the nature of illustration is highly abstract, children often "discover 'secrets' in the illustrations that are usually missed by skipping and scanning adults" (Meek, 1998, p. 19).

Clay (1991) claimed that "reading is also an activity which demands the analysis of complex visual stimuli" and one of the ways that children can gain experience in visual analysis is through looking at pictures (p. 38). When students are observing, discussing, and reflecting on visual input, they are developing perception and visualization. They learnt that, similar to the way that the written word consists of

symbols that communicate meaning, pictures consists of symbols that transmit ideas, experience and feelings that can be shared (Honigman & Bhavnagri, 1998). Whitehead (1997) on the other hand believed that "pictures and texts play a complex and significant part in introducing children to literature and preparing them for literacy" (p. 111). As most of the time the ability to read has been associated with the ability to read words, we have overlooked or taken for granted the "part that illustrations in a picture book play in the literary development of a reader" (Graham, 1990, p. 7). Stewig (1980) noted that visual-verbal skill, in other words the ability to decode messages in pictures and encode these findings in coherent oral language, is a necessary ingredient in literacy. Bromley (1992) claimed that the ability to read pictures is one aspect of readiness to read print and reading pictures is also an important ingredient in vocabulary development and comprehension. Bromley also added that the child who notices and interprets pictures probably comprehends more fully the accompanying print than the child who ignores clues found in pictures. Picture reading that involves describing, comparing, and valuing requires children to both comprehend and compose ideas. It is closely related to print reading, which involves literal, interpretive, and evaluative comprehension, in that describing the composition of a picture is similar to relating the literal information in a text (Bromley, 1992).

Most of the studies on picture books in the teaching of reading have highlighted the importance of picture books in generating active reading and developing active readers (Astorga, 1999; Panteleo, 2005; Whitehead, 1997). Whitehead (1997) believed that reading picture books can be likened to "authoring or creating a story" as the lack of

texts means that a picture book is rich with "narrative spaces" that must be filled in by the readers (p. 109). As the readers must do so much to make the stories mean something, young readers usually "stimulate the creations of links between book worlds and everyday life and shape individual story telling in the direction of literary conventions" (p. 111). Picture books are more open to interpretation by readers, and they demand collaboration by readers in the construction of meaning and this allows the readers to be both cognitively and affectively engaged throughout their reading (Pantaleo, 2005). Astorga (1999) believed that reading picture books promotes active learning through experience as there is an implicit questioning process taking place with learners moving from the analytical stage (locating patterns in language and linking them to the visual images) to a critical stage (identifying the purposes they have in the story). Essentially, what picture books allow children to have is meaningful interest in books and a sense of freedom to construct meaning from the book and this is grounded in Bruner's idea (1986) that children's linguistic development is dependent on their own perceptions of meaning.

Reading and Visual Literacy

Picture books are learning tools, information resources, and sign systems. As a distinct genre, picture books provide children with a narrative language model and visual experiences. In contrast to the often-articulated information needs of adults, studies have shown that it is difficult to pinpoint children's information needs and to know more about how children evaluate information (Hirsh, 1999; Walter, 1994). Nevertheless, children, particularly younger ones, may have pictorial needs as they try to understand the meanings of objects and their environment.

It is believed that a child's visual comprehension develops earlier than verbal comprehension (Barry, 1997). Piaget and Inhelder (2000) stated that because young children have little knowledge of the living world and developing conceptions, they need a large amount of visual information to represent their thoughts. This may explain why their information needs are distinctly pictorial rather than textual, particularly in younger children.

Research from the area of reading education often emphasizes visual literacy in relation to visual perception. Visual perception encompasses a pattern-making process that begins with the organization of information to extraction of meaning (Myers, 1989). Perception is viewed as an initial step towards preparing a child's reading and aesthetic skills. Perceptual ability has been recognized as important in relation to the success of schooling. In reading education, visual literacy, which is based on visual perception, is visual perceptual competence or a set of skills to interpret images and develop visual concepts.

Reading is a process of literacy with mental imagery or a representation of words, with a belief that verbal and nonverbal systems exist through reading (Sadoski & Paivio, 2001). Children's visual perception varies with their age and developmental stages, and their learning experience is a unique aspect of their visual perception, which involves conceptual change and development. By reading picture books, it is believed that children can develop their visual perception abilities toward verbal and nonverbal information (Yu, 2007).

Word and Image Interactions

Pictures and words are used to convey the story in picture books. Nevertheless pictures and words do not exist as separate entities in picture books. Rather, in the process of conveying meaning to the readers, there exists an interaction between these two modes. "Children reading picture books must find routes through the text that connect words and images" (Lewis, 2001, p. 32).

Word-image relationship in picture books vary and the relationship can fall into several categories. Some picture books can be read without "reading" the pictures while still maintaining the essentials of the narrative (Unsworth, 2001). In some picture books however, the images clearly support the inexperienced reader's efforts in understanding the story via text. In this context, the participation of the inexperienced reader is strongly scaffolded by the images that appear before the text. Another type of relationship between text and image is one that is counter-pointing as there is an existence of "dual narratives" between the text and image where the images construct a different story from that constructed by the text (Unsworth, 2001).

Several studies have been undertaken to describe the relationships between text and image in picture books. Some of these studies have produced several categories to describe the text-image relationship, while some have come up with a single term to describe this relationship. Agosto (1999) for instance, differentiates between parallel storytelling, where text and illustrations simultaneously tell the same story in picture storybook, and interdependent storytelling, where "both forms of media (must be

considered) concurrently in order to comprehend" the book's story (p. 267). Golden (1990) on the other hand, describes five types of visual-verbal relationship in picture storybooks. These are: "text and picture are symmetrical; text depends on picture for clarification; illustration enhances, elaborates text; text carries primary narrative, illustration is selective; and illustration carries primary narrative, text is selective" (p. 104). Schwarcz (1982) categorized text-image relationships into nine which includes congruency, elaboration, specification, amplification, extension, complementation, alternation, deviation, and counterpoint. Doonan (1993) on the other hand used six categories to describe the text-image relationship and these are "elaborate, amplify, extend, complement, contradict, and deviate" (p. 18), while Nikolajeva and Scott (as cited in Lewis, 2001) in describing the text-image relationship came up with four main categories consisting of symmetry, enhancement, counterpoint, and contradiction.

Some studies on the other hand have resorted to using a single term to describe the text-image relationship. Sipe (1998) for instance, described this relationship as the 'synergy'. Mitchell (1994) used the term 'imagetext' and described this term as "composite synthetic works (or concepts) that combine image and text" (p. 89). Lewis (2001) talked about the 'ecology' of the picture books, where pictures and words "interact ecologically, and the book acts as a miniature ecosystem" (p. 48). Lewis further explained that an ecological perspective emphasizes "the interdependence or interanimation of word and image" in picture books (p. 48). Lewis's study echoed a much earlier study conducted by Ferreiro and Teberosky (1983) on Argentinian children where they concluded that children are able to go from one system to the other without

fundamentally modifying the act of interpretation because print and picture form a "complementary whole" as both are part of a "closely knit unit and together express a meaning" (p. 62).

Pictures and words are considered as two different systems in conveying the story to the readers, thus the cognitive processing of these two systems are also assumed to be different (Paivio, 1979). Paivio's double coding theory assumes that there are two cognitive subsystems, one specialized for the representation and processing of imagery, and the other specialized in dealing with language or verbal and textual input.

Imagery and Verbal Processes

In dual coding theory, imagery and verbal processes are seen as alternative coding systems, or modes of symbolic representation, which are developmentally linked to experiences with concrete objects (images) and events as well as with language (Paivio, 1979, 2006). In the beginning the focus of dual coding theory research was on memory and later it expanded to other cognitive phenomena. Nevertheless, memory remains central to dual coding theory because it is the basis of all knowledge and thought; in addition, it is believed that learning and memory are the heart of educational goals (Paivio, 2006). Especially important for dual coding theory and its applications are the beneficial effects of concreteness and imagery on memory. In regard to concreteness, memory performance generally increases uniformly from abstract words, to concrete words, to objects or their pictures. In the case of language, the concreteness effect occurs with materials ranging in length from words, to sentences, to long passages, with concrete

memory exceeding abstract memory performance by a 2:1 ratio on average (Paivio, 2006). The concreteness advantage is even more striking in associative memory tasks in which recall of response items is cued by concrete stimulus words or by pictures.

Paivio (1979) stated that several studies have compared free recall of pictures and words and most of these studies have found immediate recall to be better for pictures than words. Moore (as cited in Paivio, 1979) for instance, compared memory for objects, pictures, and written and spoken words. He found immediate recall to be better for objects than for pictures and better for pictures than for words. Bousfield, Esterson, and Whitmarsh (as cited in Paivio, 1979) looked at recall for nouns alone, nouns along with uncolored pictures of their referents, and nouns with their colored pictures. Recall was found to be the least for words alone and highest for the colored pictures. Cole, Frankel, and Sharp (as cited in Paivio, 1979) found objects or pictures consistently easier to recall than words for children grades one through nine. These findings according to Paivio are consistent with past assumption that concrete objects make a particularly deep impression to the organ of memory as they are more vivid and memorable than words. These experiments also in some ways indicate that recall or recognition is enhanced by presenting information in both visual and verbal form.

Paivio (1979) claimed that the nature and development of imagery and verbal processes as two functional symbolic systems can be discussed in three areas: concrete versus abstract; static versus dynamic; and parallel processing versus sequential processing.

It is assumed that images are associated with concrete objects and events, while speech or words are functionally used in abstract problems, concepts and relationships (Bruner, 1964; Paivio, 1979; Piaget & Inhelder, 1966). Bruner (1964) believed that the usual course of intellectual development moves from enactive (motor) to iconic (imagery), and symbolic (verbal) process in meaning making. Nevertheless, he also believed that "this development is not linear in nature and one could go back and forth from symbolic representation to iconic or enactive representation" (Bruner, 1966, p. 49). Similarly, Bruner also suggested that a child's understanding of concrete concepts develops gradually. Piaget further explained that "images and words are coordinated to concreteness-abstractness in the sense that images designate concrete objects in terms of their perceptual and figural properties, whereas words can signify concepts – relations, classes, numbers" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1966, pp. 450-451). Piaget also stressed the interaction between image and word, believing that these two factors complement one another and are essential in the process of meaning making (Piaget & Inhelder, 1966). Similarly, Paivio (1979) in his studies of imagery and verbal processes concluded that modes of representation generally evolve from concrete towards more abstract and flexible forms – from concrete to more abstract imagery, overlapping with emergence of verbal symbolic processes, which in turn become more abstract. Nevertheless, Paivio stressed that this is not to suggest that one symbolic system is replaced by another; instead, it may be assumed that these two modes will eventually interact with one another in the course of meaning making.

Imagery is also assumed to have a more static function, while words have a more dynamic function. Nevertheless there is no clear dichotomy between the two functions. Piaget and Inhelder (1966) for instance believed that an image changes from one that is static to a more dynamic one. They noted that imagery prior to the ages of seven or eight years is "characterized by a static quality where movement is represented only by imagination of successive stages of the act; later imagery is more flexible, capable of representing movements and transformations, and characterized especially by its anticipatory quality" (Piaget & Inhelder as cited in Paivio, 1979, p. 30). Paivio (1979) later emphasized that the most important feature of this analysis is that the "more mature imagery incorporates the implicit motor components of imitative acts in its capacity to symbolize movements and transformations" (p. 30). Though words are considered to have a more dynamic function as compared to imagery, words too can have static and dynamic functions. Paivio stated that concrete nouns and noun phrases are like static images that fulfill a representational function, that is, they symbolize objects and situations. Action verbs or verb phrases effect transitions in the stream of thought by virtue of their capacity to represent movement and change. Thus, "neither images nor words ordinarily act as independent processes but interact continually in both functions, and which mode will be functionally dominant in a given situation will depend on the nature and demands of the situation" (Paivio, 1979, pp. 32-33).

Apart from being considered as abstract and static, imagery also can be regarded as a symbolic system specialized for parallel processing of information while the verbal symbolic system is viewed as a sequential processing system. By definition, parallel

processing means "items of information can be processed or operations carried out independently of one another and the functioning of any element in the system does not depend on the outcome of the functioning of another" (Paivio, 1979, p. 34). Sequential processing on the other hand refers to the "manner in which a process is organized – it is sequential when the successive steps involved in its functioning are interdependent, the outcome at one point determining the next step in the sequence" (p. 34). Imagery is basically "a parallel processing system in both the spatial and operational sense. The verbal system, on the other hand, functions in an operationally parallel manner as well as sequentially. Imaginal and verbal systems thus overlap fully in regard to the capacity for operationally parallel functioning; they are differentiated with respect to spatial processing, which is characteristic only of imagery, and sequential processing which is relatively more characteristic of the verbal system" (Paivio, 1979, p. 37).

On the whole, it can be summarized that in imagery and verbal processes are processes that do not come one after the other or one that replaces another; the two processes often interact with one another in the course of meaning making. Generally it could be seen that imagery is relatively better than the verbal system for representing and coping with the concrete aspects of a situation, with transformation, and with parallel processing in the spatial sense. The verbal system on the hand is superior in abstract and sequential processing tasks (Paivio, 1979). Thus imagery having both spatially and operationally parallel properties is likely to be characterized by freedom and speed of association, whereas the sequentially organized verbal system is capable of providing organization to the associative process. Hence reading the multi-modal texts of visual

and textual input involves not only understanding how children construct meaning using the two domains, but also seeing how children move among sign systems and invent connections between the different forms of symbolizing – drawing, writing and storytelling (Wright, 2007).

Conclusions

In encouraging children to be active constructors of meaning, they have to be given the opportunity to do so. Through the use of picture books, children should be encouraged to read and interact, to read and write, and to read and draw. These will not only help the children to construct their own meaning of the text, they will also help the children to activate their imagery and verbal processing to have not only a better understanding of the text but also help to develop their visual literacy and second language literacy.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was conducted to understand emergent second language readers' visual literacy. Specifically, this study intended to better understand how emergent second language readers develop visual literacy through the use of four types of picture books. This study investigated and explored: (i) how emergent second language readers use visuals to build on their second language literacy and (ii) how social and cultural contexts shape emergent second language readers' visual literacy.

This chapter explains the importance and the significance of using the qualitative approach for this study. It also looks at the research design of the study which consists of: research procedures, role of the researcher, site and sample selection, and method of data collection. In addition, method of data analysis, reliability and validity of data, as well as ethical issues in the study are discussed in this chapter. In the last part of this chapter, an initial encounter with the context is discussed briefly in relation to the study.

Research Design

Research is "a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or an issue" (Creswell, 2008, p. 3). Research is also seen as a form of systematic investigation to understand existing phenomena, issues or topics (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998). Research designs dictate the specific procedures that

are involved in data collection, data analysis and report writing (Creswell, 2008). 'Design' as used in research refers to the researcher's plan of how to proceed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Research designs selected for a qualitative study should enable a researcher to probe further into the problem of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

The main aim of this study was to better understand emergent second language readers' visual literacy through their engagement with picture books. This study set out to look at how emergent second language readers interpreted visual and written inputs in picture books and how these young learners comprehended the story in picture books based on these two inputs. This study required the researcher to understand the meaning-making process of young learners when they were reading picture books and this information had to be obtained directly from the young learners. Thus, qualitative approach is seen as the needed method as it enables the researcher to explore the phenomena and to have a deeper understanding of it (Creswell, 2008). The following section gives the rationale for using qualitative research.

Rationale for Using the Qualitative Approach

The main interest in qualitative research is the understanding of how people construct meaning from the experiences that they have in the world. In qualitative research, it is assumed that "meaning is embedded in people's experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) believed there are five features of qualitative research. First, it is naturalistic as the data of the research is taken from the actual setting and the researcher is the key instrument. In the context of this study, the sessions conducted with the participants were held in their school. "Context" is the main concern of qualitative research as it is felt that action can be best understood if it is observed in the setting where it occurs. In this study, the participants' family background, school background and reading background were investigated. These gave the researcher a better understanding of the contexts in which the participants were embedded.

Second, qualitative research is descriptive in nature. The researchers try to describe what "a particular situation or view of the world is like in narrative form" without leaving anything out and that "everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied". In this study, the researcher noted all the events happening before, while and after the sessions with the participants in her fieldnotes. In addition, observation tables were also developed prior to the data collection period to ensure all observations during the sessions were recorded.

Third, qualitative research is concerned with process rather than the outcomes and products. Thus, the main focus of a qualitative study is on "how definitions are formed". This study looked at how young learners constructed meaning from visuals and words in four types of picture books. Thus the focus was more on how and why the learners interpreted the visuals and words as such rather than the interpretations themselves.

Fourth, data in qualitative research tend to be analyzed inductively. Abstractions are built as the "particulars that have been gathered are grouped together". It is like putting pieces of puzzle together but, in qualitative research, researchers are not putting together a puzzle whose picture they already know but they are constructing a picture that will only take shape as they collect and examine parts of the puzzle. The three sources of data (observation, interview and document analyses) from this study were first analyzed and triangulated before general coding was developed. This general coding became the basis for determining the emerging themes from the data.

Fifth, "meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the participants' perspectives and with ensuring that they capture perspectives accurately. Thus qualitative researchers set up strategies and procedures to enable them to consider experiences from the informants' perspectives (Bogden & Biklen 2003, pp. 5-6). In this study, the researcher tried to give the space and time for the participants to express their own views and perspectives. Although a specific time was allocated for each session and for each participant, this arrangement was made flexible to ensure that the participants were able to express their views without feeling forced to do so. The participants were also made to feel free to express their views and opinions in any language most comfortable for them. The researcher too was flexible in terms of the language she used to question the participants.

As stated earlier, this study looked at how emergent second language readers constructed meaning from picture books and how this is related to their development of

visual literacy. This involved the understanding of an abstract concept which took place in the emergent second language readers' mind and only through qualitative approach can this abstract concept be captured and understood. Qualitative approach in the context of this study enabled the researcher to observe the emergent second language readers when they read picture books and how they interpreted the visual and written input in the picture books. In addition it gave the researcher opportunity to interact with the young learners to better understand how they conveyed meaning from picture books. This enabled the researcher to have a better understanding of the emergent second language readers' visual literacy practices.

Case Study

Several types of research strategy are used in qualitative research, namely ethnography, case study, phenomenology, naturalistic study, and others. Each type has its own distinctive features and its own use based on the particular study's research questions and expected findings.

Case study is often used by the researcher to understand a unique phenomenon in a systematic manner (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). Case study can be further defined by its special features which are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. In studying a phenomenon, using a case study allows one to have more concrete findings which will enable better understanding of the studied phenomena.

This study involved the investigation of emergent second language readers' visual literacy through the young learners' engagement with picture books. It involved the understanding of how children make sense of visual and written input in the picture books. In order for the researcher to answer the stated research questions, case study method needed to be employed as case study allows one to answer the "how" and "why" questions being posed (Yin, 1994).

In this study, emergent second language readers' visual literacy was the case being studied. Thus, the emergent second language readers were the main respondents of the study and the main unit of analysis of the study. One site was used for this study and the selection of sites was based on the purposeful sampling method. This particular site was selected as it enabled the researcher to obtain rich data on emergent second language readers' visual literacy practices as the site allowed the researcher to compare (and to understand) the similarities and differences in visual literacy practices among participants from six different contexts.

Figure 3.1 describes key aspects of the qualitative research design of this study: defining the research questions; research procedures; building design around research settings and populations, choosing the sources of data collection, data analysis and strategies to strengthen the reliability and validity.

Research Questions	→	Research procedures	→	Researcher's role	→	Sites and participants	→	Source of Data	→	Data Analysis	→	Understandings

```
Research          Interview        Constant Comparative    Data source
Question 1                         Method                  triangulation
            6 students                                     Methodological
Research          Observation      Content Analysis        triangulation
Question 2                                                 Member check
                  Documentary      Content Analysis        Audit trail
                  Evidence                                 Peer review
                                                           Thick rich description
```
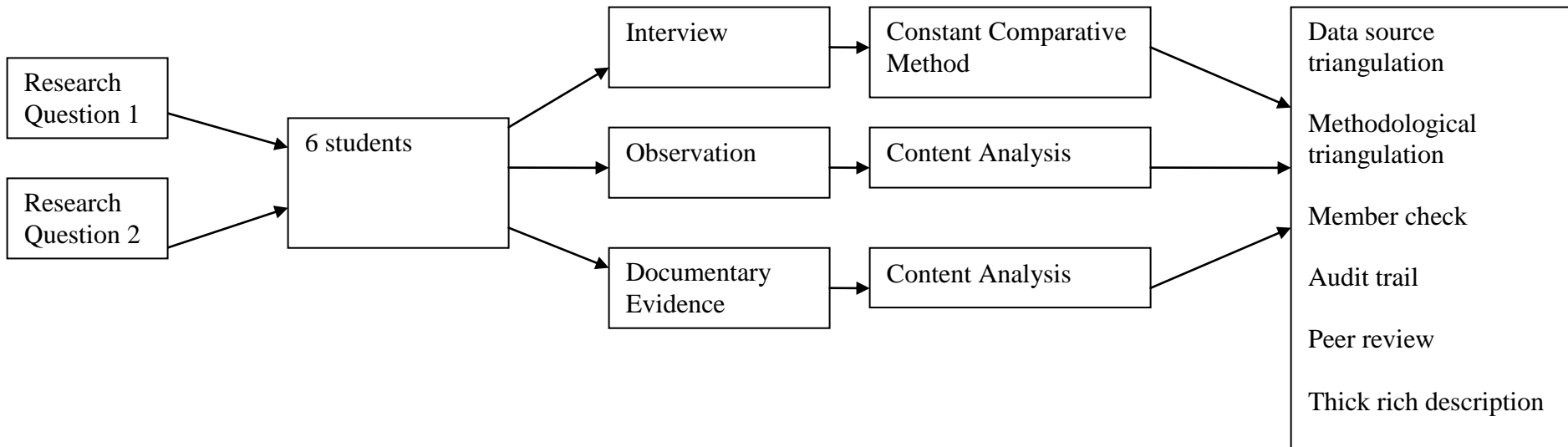
Figure 3.1. Overview of Research Design of the Study.

Research Procedures

The fieldwork of this study involved the procedures as illustrated in Figure 3.2. Several layers of approval were obtained from the gatekeepers of the site before the researcher was allowed to enter the identified site. First, permission from the Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD), Ministry of Education (MOE), Malaysia was obtained (*refer to Appendix J*). This was followed by permission from the State Education Department and the District Education Department (*refer to Appendix J*). The next step was to approach the headmistress of the identified national type primary school to obtain permission to conduct the study in her respective school. Equally important was obtaining permission from the participants' parents/guardians (*refer to Appendix K*) and class teachers to participate in the study.

Secondly, the researcher started the data collection procedures by first explaining to the selected participants the objectives of the study, what they needed to do and what the researcher would be doing; most importantly, the researcher emphasized confidentiality of all information obtained from the participants.

Thirdly, the data collection and data analysis took place simultaneously. The researcher then reflected on the work process, data and the findings which were obtained from the researcher's observation, interview and document analysis. Lastly, the researcher analyzed all the data obtained from the mentioned six participants more intensively and prepared the written report of the findings.
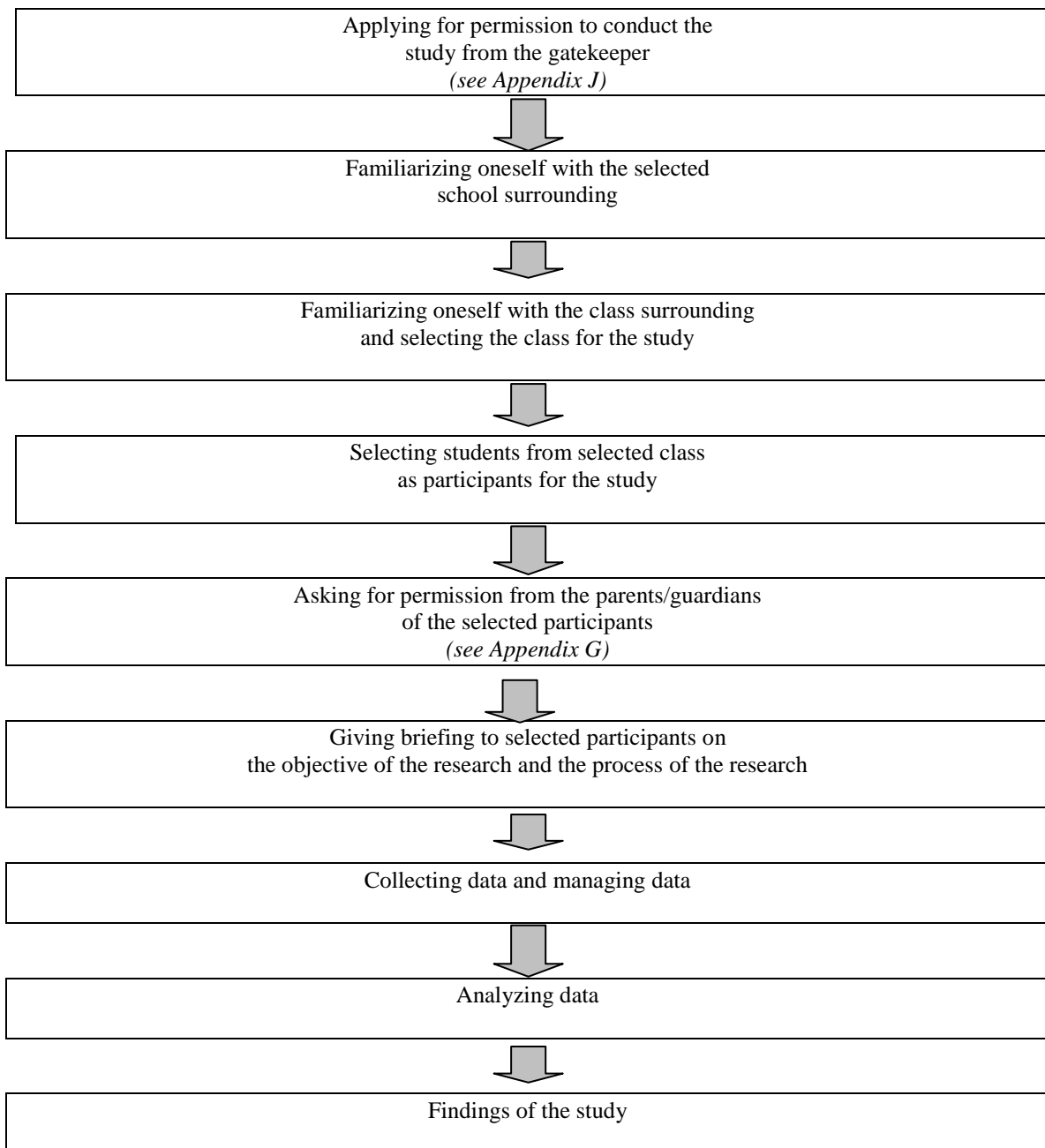
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Applying for permission to conduct the           │
│                  study from the gatekeeper                    │
│                    (see Appendix J)                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Familiarizing oneself with the selected          │
│                     school surrounding                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Familiarizing oneself with the class surrounding      │
│              and selecting the class for the study            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│             Selecting students from selected class            │
│                 as participants for the study                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Asking for permission from the parents/guardians      │
│                  of the selected participants                 │
│                    (see Appendix G)                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Giving briefing to selected participants on        │
│      the objective of the research and the process of the research │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Collecting data and managing data               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                       Analyzing data                          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Findings of the study                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 3.2. Work Process of the Fieldwork.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998). The researcher strives to have in-depth understanding of situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions that take place in that context (Patton as cited in Merriam, 1998). Data are mediated through the researcher and meaning is mediated through the researcher's perceptions (Merriam, 1998). The main concern here is "understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspective and not the researcher's" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). This is what Merriam (1998) termed as the "emic" or "insider's perspectives" which is the opposite of "etic" or "outsiders view" (p. 6)

In this study, the researcher assumed the role of participant as observer in which the researcher was "involved in the setting's central activities, assuming responsibilities that advance the group, but without fully committing herself to members' values and goals" (Adler & Adler as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 101). In this context, the researcher participated in the activity but not to the extent of becoming totally absorbed in the activity. While participating, the researcher tried to stay sufficiently detached to observe and analyze.

Since this study dealt with young children, special considerations needed to be taken by the researcher. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) claimed that adults usually have a difficult time taking what children say seriously. Adults also tend to "evaluate children's behaviour and feel responsible for them more than they do for their age peers" (p. 86). Researchers need to break out of these habits if they want to work with children or they will not be able to capture

children's true behavior in the research setting. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested that "an adult researcher can participate with children not as authority figure (an adult) but as quasi-friend" (p. 86). Although it is quite difficult for children to accept adults as equals, a researcher can move toward being a "tolerated insider in children's society" (p. 86). Thus Merriam (1998) suggested that in any case, "the researcher must be sensitive to the effects one might be having on the situation and account for those effects" (p. 104). In the context of this study, the researcher constantly evaluated her interactions with each participant after each session. This evaluation was noted in the researcher's fieldnotes. The researcher also listened again to her recorded interaction with the participants at the end of each day of the data collection period. These were done to evaluate the researcher's mode of questioning and interaction with the young participants to ensure that she did not take the role of authority figure in the sessions with the young participants.

Selection of Site and Participants

This study entailed a case study approach and the main purpose was to understand emergent second language readers' visual literacy practices while they engaged with selected picture books. Thus the method of sampling of this study was purposeful sampling as this type of sampling enabled the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the meaning making process that the children engaged in when reading picture books.

Purposeful sampling can also refer to methods to choose both samples and sites (Creswell, 2008). The site selected for this study is School A, a national type primary school. School A is located in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. It is a fairly new sub-urban

school with a total of about 300 students. Most of the students come from middle-income families and the Malays made up the majority. As for the samples of the study, six Year 1 students from School A were selected as the participants of this study. The main criterion for selection of participants was they must be emergent readers of English. Emergent readers are defined as those readers who are not able to read yet but they are at the stage where they are developing background knowledge and schema which prepares them for learning how to read (Bromley, 1992; Clay, 1991; Wood, 2005). In most cases, emergent readers are able to decode a minimum number of single words but would not be able to read sentences. The six participants consisted of three boys and three girls from different social and cultural backgrounds, and at the time of the study all the participants were 7 years old.

Data Collection

In this study, the researcher wanted to look at how emergent readers read picture books. This study involved investigation and exploration of the reading process when emergent readers were faced with visual and written input in their reading. With reference to the research questions of this study, observation, interviews and document analysis were deemed as the most suitable methods in collecting the needed data for this study. The data collection procedures for this study are explained in the following section.

Data collection procedures

The study was carried out over a three-month period. The researcher started the sessions with the emergent readers in March 2009 and ended her session in July 2009. A total of twelve sessions were conducted with each of the six participants using four types of picture

books. Three sessions were conducted for each type of picture book, and each session lasted for about 30 minutes. The sessions were not conducted within the class time; thus the researcher needed to establish the time in which the participants could be pulled out from their respective classes to undergo the mentioned twelve sessions. After discussion with the Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs of the school, the researcher was allowed to pull out the selected participants during the Bahasa Melayu periods as the subject was allocated the most number of periods in a week (six periods in a week). The researcher was allowed to pull out the selected participants from their class to have sessions with them on Tuesday (9:10-10:10am), Thursday (10:30am-12:00 noon), and Friday (8:45-9:15am). As the researcher was not allowed to have longer hours to conduct the sessions with all the six participants in a day, a schedule was developed to determine which participant would be having a session on which particular day.

The stages for the sessions in this study were adapted from Literacy Development Cycle (LDC) developed by Unsworth (2001). LDC was developed with the focus on developing children's knowledge about language and image at the same time as they are learning verbal and visual language and learning through verbal and visual language. LDC consists of three main stages; modelled practice, guided practice, and independent practice (Figure 3.3). Modelled practice focused on reading the text, guided practice focused on working with the text (exploration of text meaning and consolidation of text processing), while independent practice focus on reviewing reading and writing.
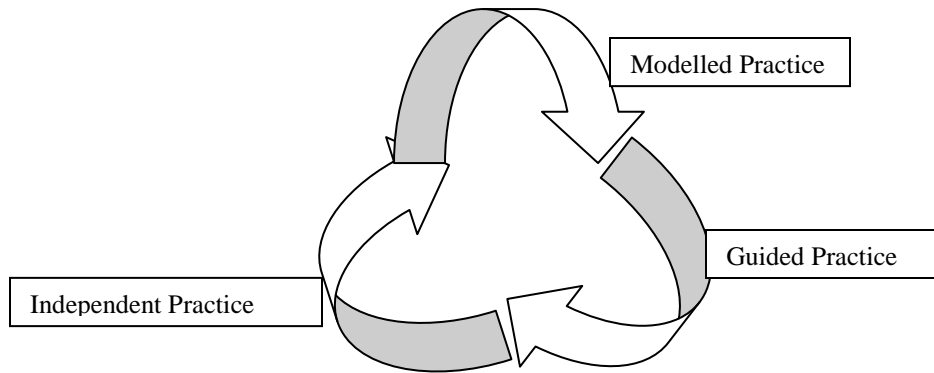
Figure 3.3. Literacy Development Cycle (Unsworth, 2001).

The sessions with the participants in this study were divided into twelve. Three sessions were allocated for one picture book, with a total of four picture books for the twelve sessions. The four picture books used in this study are as listed in Figure 3.4. They represent varying types of picture books, namely printed picture book (where each page bears the elements of illustration and text), wordless picture book (where only illustrations are present in the book), comic (illustrations and texts in speech bubbles) and online picture book. For the purpose of this study, the online picture book was taken from the Children's Literature Development Project (ChiLD) website (http://projectchild.net). The printed picture book and wordless picture book are categorized as 'picture book' and not part of any early readers' series. The online picture book selected for this study is categorized as 'Level 2' in ChiLD's website and recommended as Pre-School literature.

Picture book	Title	Author/Illustrator
Printed picture book (illustration and text)	*Gorilla*	Anthony Browne
Printed wordless picture book (illustration only)	*Flotsam*	David Weisner
Comic	*Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd*	Bill Matheny
Online picture books (image and text)	*The Little Red Hen*	Starfall/Michael Ramirez

Figure 3.4. List of Picture Books.

For each type of picture book, the first session was to introduce the participants to the picture book and the main purpose was to arouse interest in the book. This was done by drawing attention to the book's external characteristics and noting features such as the cover, the title, the name of the author and the publisher. According to Unsworth (2001), this will provide the opportunity to discuss the text as a "social artifact" (p. 187) as some children may have read or seen the picture book before or they may have heard of the author in their English classes or at home. In the case of wordless picture books, the researcher went page by page, allowing plenty of time for the participants to express their ideas/opinions on the illustrations. At this stage, the participants were encouraged to comment on what they thought about the story or information, what they noticed about the text and the illustrations, or any other patterns that they noticed or what might have puzzled them.

The second session focused on the exploration of meanings. The researcher interacted with the participants around the text. This included exploring the ambiguities of the illustrations and the text, and the perspectives from which the story was told. At this stage also the researcher (through questioning and responding to questions) encouraged the young learners to interact closely with print and image to confirm and extend their meaning-making strategies based on their integrative use of cues from the visual and textual input. This session was crucial to the study as it enabled the researcher to better understand how the emergent second language readers made sense of illustrations/visuals/images for interpreting not only what was conveyed in images but also how they connected pictures and text in their meaning-making process.

As reading is closely related to writing and drawing (Clay, 1991; Hudelson, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978), the third session looked at the emergent second language readers' meaning-making process through their writing and drawing. At this stage, the young learners were given a piece of paper sized 27cm x 37cm and were asked to write or draw in response to the story in the mentioned picture books. No maximum or minimum number of words or sentences was given as the purpose of this study was to better understand children's responses to books with visual and written input. The researcher at this stage also tried to get a better understanding of what have been produced by the students through the researcher's interaction with the participants reflecting on what they have said, written and drawn not only in this session but also the two prior sessions.

Picture book	Session	Activity/Focus	Time (mins)	Sources of Data
Printed picture book (illustration & text)	1	• Introduction to picture book. • Modelled and collaborative reading.	30	• Observation • Interview • Document Analysis
	2	• Exploration of illustration and text meaning.	30	
	3	• Responses to picture book through writing and drawing. • Review and reflection	30	
Printed wordless picture books (illustrations only)	1	• Introduction to picture book. • Extracting ideas/opinions from illustrations	30	• Observation • Interview • Document Analysis
	2	• Exploration of meaning from the illustrations.	30	
	3	• Responses to wordless picture book through writing and drawing. • Review and reflection.	30	
Comic (illustrations and texts in speech bubbles)	1	• Introduction to comic. • Modelled and collaborative reading.	30	• Observation • Interview • Document Analysis
	2	• Exploration of image and text meaning.	30	
	3	• Responses to comic through writing and drawing. • Review and reflection.	30	
Online picture books (illustrations & text)	1	• Introduction to the website and the selected online picture book. • Modelled and collaborative reading.	30	• Observation • Interview • Document Analysis
	2	• Exploration of image and text meaning.	30	
	3	• Responses to online picture book through writing and drawing. • Review and reflection.	30	

Figure 3.5. A Brief Description of the Three Sessions Conducted for Each Type of Picture Book.

Sources of Data

Observation

Observation is the "process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site" (Creswell, 2008, p. 221). Observation bears several advantages as these include the ability to better understand the setting of the study, to record information as it occurs in its natural setting, to record behavior as it is happening, and to provide some knowledge of context or to provide specific incidents which later can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews (Merriam, 1998). In the context of this study observation is extremely crucial as the participants were young children and they may have difficulty verbalizing their ideas through interview (Creswell, 2008). In addition, as stated earlier, children are different from one another, thus describing children's visual literacy based on a standardized test is actually masking the real potential of the child (Clay, 1991).

In this study the observation took into account six elements based on Merriam (1998). Nevertheless, the researcher did not rule out other elements that emerged from the observation later in the study. As stated by Merriam (1998), "where to focus or stop action cannot be determined ahead of time, the focus must be allowed to emerge and in fact it may change over the course of the study" (p. 97). The six elements that the researcher started to focus on at the beginning of the study were:

    i.   The physical setting

       The physical setting of the school and the room where the sessions with the participants took place were described in the researcher's fieldnotes. The room

allocated for the sessions changed three times throughout the data collection period. The reasons for these changes were also noted in the fieldnotes. The physical setting of the school on each day of the data collection period was also noted, for example if the school on that day was holding Teacher's Day or Science Day.

ii. The participants

The participants' family background and reading background were investigated in the beginning of the study. This was later followed by investigation into participants' academic background through the researcher's informal interaction with their teachers.

iii. Activities and interactions in the setting

Interactions in the setting were all recorded using audio recorder and the activities were recorded through a digital video recorder.

iv. The conversations that took place in the setting. Periods of silence and nonverbal behavior in the conversations were also noted. These were all recorded through the researcher's fieldnotes, observation tables, audio recorder and video recorder.

v. The researcher's own behavior. This included what the researcher did and said in the observation and what the researcher thought about what was happening in the setting. These were all noted in the researcher's fieldnotes.

Fieldnotes

As in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998), what data the researcher is able to capture in his or her observation is of primary importance. "What is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw data from which a study's findings eventually emerge. This written account of the observation constitutes 'fieldnotes'" (Merriam, 1998, p. 104). In this study the researcher's fieldnotes were of two types; descriptive fieldnotes and reflective fieldnotes (Creswell, 2008; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

In descriptive fieldnotes, the researcher tried her best to record objectively the details of what had taken place in the field (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The researcher recorded a description of the events, activities and people in the setting (Creswell, 2008). The objective of this was to capture the exact scenes in the field as far as possible so that the researcher was able to analyze and better understand the world she was observing. In writing the descriptive fieldnotes, the researcher tried as much as possible to avoid making evaluation or summary of what she had observed but to give detailed description of what had been observed. Thus it was particularly important when working on description, the researcher avoided using abstract words. Instead the researcher should have "detailed renderings of exactly what people are doing and saying and what they look like" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 112). Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 113) suggested that the descriptive aspects of the fieldnotes should include the following parameters:

i. Portraits of the subjects. This encompasses the physical appearances, dress, mannerism, and style of talking. Focus should also be given to particular aspects of

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subjects that might set them apart from others. In the context of this study, the researcher described the mentioned traits in the fieldnotes. The researcher also noted in her fieldnotes if the participants were not able to attend the sessions and the reasons for their absence.

ii.   Reconstruction of dialogue. As much as possible, one must quote the participants or else give an approximation of what they have said. In this study, the researcher reconstructed the dialogue which she thought was the key to her understanding of the participants' interpretations of the visuals and words in the picture books.

iii.   Description of physical setting. The diagram of the physical setting of the rooms used to conduct sessions with the young participants was constructed. The physical setting was also recorded through video recording.

iv.   Accounts of particular events. The notes include a listing of who are involved in the event, in what manner, and the nature of the action. In this study, the researcher was the sole person involved in the data collection process; however, any accounts which involved the headmistress and the teachers of the school as well as the teachers of the participants were also recorded in the researcher's fieldnotes.

v.   Depiction of activities. This involved detailed descriptions of behavior where the researcher will try to reproduce the sequence of both behavior and particular acts. The depictions of activities were recorded in the fieldnotes and these were later cross checked with the observation tables, audio and video recording of the depiction of activities.

vi.   The researcher's behavior. The researcher noted her own behavior while observing the participants as this enabled the researcher to see if she had developed any prior assumptions while observing the participants.

Descriptive fieldnotes that are bountiful in good descriptions and dialogue relevant to what occurs in the setting will give "rich data" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003 p. 11) for the study. This rich data are filled with pieces of evidence that will be parts of the puzzle that the researcher will put together.

Reflective fieldnotes on the other hand record the researcher's personal account of the observation. These notes record personal thoughts that the researcher has during the observation. These include the researcher's speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impression and prejudices that emerge during the observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2008). As the researcher is central to the collection of data and its analysis, it is crucial for the researcher to be able to be aware of her "own relationship to the setting and of the evolution of the design and analysis" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 114). This helps to continuously improve the fieldnotes collected in the study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested categories to be included in the reflective fieldnotes as follows:

i)   Reflections on analysis. In this study the researcher speculated about what she has learnt, the themes that were emerging, the patterns that were present or the connection that existed from one piece of data to the other.

ii)   Reflections of method. The researcher constantly reflected on her methods of conducting the sessions in her fieldnotes after each session with the participants. These reflections helped the researcher to think through the methodological problems that she was facing and how to deal with these problems.

iii)   Reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflicts. As the fieldwork required the researchers to go into the lives of the participants, there might be a conflict between the researcher's own values and responsibilities. This matter needs to be reflected upon.

iv)   Reflection on the researcher's frame of mind. In this study, the researcher's assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and prejudices were reflected on and noted to ensure that the researcher was aware of her own assumptions and what actually emerged from the study.

v)   Points of clarification. In the course of taking down descriptive notes, a researcher might make some changes to the notes taken. In the beginning of the study, there were changes in the earlier selected participants. These changes were clarified in the researcher's fieldnotes and the reasons for these changes were also noted.

Having reflective fieldnotes is a way for the researcher to consciously take into account who she is, how she thinks, what actually happens in the course of the study and how she perceives the things that happen in the study. Reflective fieldnotes are one way of attempting to not only acknowledge the effect of the researcher on the study but also to control the effect (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Audio-recording and Video-recording

An audio-recorder was used at the onset of each session with the participants. This enabled the researcher to capture their verbal discourse and the verbal interaction between the participants and the researcher during the 12 sessions conducted. As the researcher was a participant-observer, audio-recording was extremely important in the

context of this study as the researcher might not be able to capture fully the respondents' verbal discourse and interactions in the midst of interacting with the participants in the sessions prepared.

Video-recording was also used and this not only complemented the audio-recording but it also enabled the researcher to interpret non-verbal gestures from the participants. As these participants were young learners who may not be able to verbalize what they saw and what they thought, it was important to capture other non-verbal features of what occurred during the sessions. As noted by Fatimah and Marina (2008) in a study looking at young learner's interaction with wordless picture book, when the learner was not able to describe a scene in the picture book with words, he would use actions and sounds to do so and at times a combination of all three; words, actions and sounds.

Interview

The aim of the study is to better understand emergent second language readers' visual literacy practices when engaging with picture books. In this study, these young learners were engaged with four types of picture books over a period of three months. The children were asked to read, interpret and respond to the story in the picture books.

Observation may enable the researcher to capture the events stated, but in order to understand what went on in the participants' minds as they read, drew, and wrote, the researcher needed to interview the participants. Although Creswell (2008) cautions the researcher on the inability for young children to verbalize how they feel and what they

think, in the context of this study, interview was used in conjunction with observation and document analysis (which will be discussed later) to substantiate the findings.

In this study, interview was conducted while the researcher was observing the participants reading the picture books and after the participants had completed their drawing and writing. The interview was semi-structured in nature where the researcher had a list of questions and issues to be explored but neither the exact wording nor order was determined before the interview. This format allowed the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging perspectives of the participants, and to new ideas emerging on the topic (Merriam, 1998).

As this study required the researcher herself to conduct "reading" sessions with the participants, the researcher was engaged in an ongoing interaction with the participants, questioning them and at the same time responding to their questions throughout the sessions. This by itself though not termed as "interview" was a source of rich data.

Documents

Document is "the umbrella term used to refer to a wide range of written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand" (Merriam, 1998, p. 112). As mentioned earlier, the participants of this study were young learners so they may not be able to know or they may not be able to verbalize how they made sense of the visual and written input in picture books. Thus document analysis was needed before the researcher could probe further during the interview sessions with the participants. In the case of this study the

documents which were analyzed to obtain data for the study were the visual and verbal texts produced by the participants as well as the four types of picture books used in this study.

Visual texts

The visual texts in this study were the ones produced by the participants at the end of the third sessions with each picture book. After the participants had read the picture books, they were asked to visually represent what they have understood as the story in each of the four types of picture books. These visual responses could be in the form of drawings, or they could be in the form of symbols or they could be in the form of stick figures.

Verbal texts

Verbal texts may be produced by the participants with help from the researcher. After the students had visually represented their responses to the picture books, they were then to dictate their pictures to the researcher. The researcher wrote the participants' dictation verbatim and not to insist on less or more words from the students. As far as possible, the researcher tried to encourage verbal responses in English but if participants attempted to write their own texts this was allowed without any prompt given by the researcher.

Picture books

Four types of picture books were used in this study – printed picture book, wordless picture book, comic and online picture book. The illustrations and the texts in these books

were analyzed together with the participants' responses to them. This allowed the researcher to have a better understanding of how the participants interpreted the illustrations and the texts in the picture books.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the "process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to enable you to come up with findings" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 147). The data collected from this study were analyzed at two levels.

In the first level of data analysis, the data were analyzed simultaneously with data collection. Ongoing analysis is crucial as without ongoing analysis, "the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of materials that need to be processed" (Merriam, 1998, p. 162). In addition, data analysis at this level was crucial in having a better and more specific understanding of the context of the study that helped the researcher to plan the path of her next data collection. At this level also, the researcher started assigning codes to the data analyzed. These codes were based on general themes that could be depicted from the events during observation, quotes during interview, or from the documents produced by the participants. Since this study involved different individuals, it also adopted the constant comparative method at this level of data analysis.

The second level of analysis took place after the data were collected. Data at this level were analyzed in a more detailed, in-depth and intense manner. A more diverse and

complex coding system was used to enable the data analysis at this level to lead to interpretation of the data. Interpretation of data involves "developing ideas about your findings, and relating them to the literature and to broader concerns and concepts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 147).

Validity and Reliability

Qualitative study needs to be rigorously conducted; the researcher needs to present insights and conclusions that ring true to the reader. Therefore, as in any other forms of research, validity and reliability need to be addressed in qualitative study. Merriam (1998) noted that the "validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization in which data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (p. 199).

In order to increase the validity and the reliability of this study, the researcher employed several strategies, namely: triangulation, long-term observation, member check, peer examination, researcher's biases, and audit trail.

Data triangulation

The three main sources of data in this study – observation and fieldnotes, interview, and document analysis were triangulated to confirm the emerging findings. Triangulation would strengthen reliability as well as validity of the data as data from one source would be confirmed and disconfirmed by data from the other two sources.

Long-term observation

Long-term observation or repeated observation is required at the site as this would enable the researcher to collect data until the point of saturation. In addition, this long-term observation enabled the researcher to reflect on the procedures employed to collect data and to make any necessary changes in order to get more reliable and valid data in the course of the study. As this study took place over a period of 3 months, involving 72 sessions with each session lasting for about 30 minutes for each participant, this indeed represented long-term observation and prolonged engagement.

Member Check

In member check the researcher took the data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom the data were derived and asked them if what the researcher had interpreted was similar to their interpretations. This was especially important for data collected from interview where the participants' responses might be wrongly interpreted by the researcher.

Peer review/examination

The researcher showed the data collected to individuals who were considered as experts in the teaching of reading, and interpreting visual inputs. This allowed the researcher to have peer examination of the data collected.

Researcher's bias

The researcher addressed her bias in her reflective fieldnotes. This was done to clarify the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation which might or might not have affected her understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Audit trail

In audit trail, the researcher described in detail the course of the study and this included describing in detail how data were collected, how coding or categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study. This is important because "if we cannot expect others to replicate our account, the best we can do is explain how we arrived at our results" (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). In addition, all audio tapes of the interview and sessions, videos of the sessions, and all relevant documents were retained for review.

Ethical Issues

In qualitative study, ethical issues are given as much concern as validity and reliability (Merriam, 1998). Ethics should be a primary concern rather than an afterthought and researchers should reflect on ethical issues throughout the research process (Creswell, 2008).

This study looked at visual literacy practices of emergent second language readers and the participants of this study were children aged seven years. As this study involved young children who may not know the risks or consequences of the study, the researcher

first sought approval from the children's parents or guardians before making them participants of the study.

As children are naturally sensitive, researchers must be careful with the choice of words and gestures when interviewing them. The researcher tried not to impose her beliefs and values on the children as the task of the interviewer is to "first and foremost to gather data, not change people" (Merriam, 1998, p. 214).

Although, in qualitative study, the reliability of the study is based on its thick description, the researcher has kept all personal information of the participants confidential to ensure the privacy of the participants. Pseudonyms are used for purposes of data analysis and report of the findings.

Initial Encounter with the Context

An initial study was conducted in November 2008 to gain better insights into the study's actual data collection procedures and the selection of participants. In this November 2008 study, visual literacy exercises were conducted with 30 students from Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 of a national type primary school in Kuala Lumpur. These 30 students consisted of 15 boys and 15 girls of various ethnic backgrounds with ages varying from seven to nine years old.

The instruments used in this study acted as baseline understanding of the participants' visual literacy practices. Three main conclusions could be derived from the

data of this study. Firstly, the data from this study reveal that almost all the participants were able to identify the English words to match the given pictures orally but most (especially the Year 1 students) were "inventing" their own spelling when they were asked to write down the words. Their spelling shows much influence of their first language which is Bahasa Melayu, thus the word "butterfly" was spelled as "baterfelai", and the word "balloon" as "belun". Secondly, these young learners relied heavily on the visual input as compared to textual input in their effort to make sense of the task given; this was especially evident among the Year 1 students. Lastly, it was found that these young learners' visual interpretations were very much influenced by their social and cultural contexts. In interpreting the given picture, most of the participants were relating the context of the picture to their own social or cultural context.

Several other aspects could also be highlighted from this initial study in relation to the research procedures of the actual study. Firstly, it was almost impossible for the researcher to do a careful observation and to take down incisive fieldnotes if the researcher had to deal with too many students at once. This study had shown to the researcher that the best way to obtain good data from the participants is to have only one participant in contact at a time. In addition, it would be extremely crucial for the researcher to have a video-recording of the session to gain better understanding of the participants' non-verbal responses. Nevertheless, the researcher has to take extra care that this method of collecting data is not intrusive and distractive to the young participants.

Secondly, with young second language learners, a lot of time needed to be given for them to respond to the activities prepared or to the questions asked. In this study, the researcher noted that these young learners would take some time before they could respond to her questions. These young learners also constantly needed to be reassured that there was no pressure for them to do the "right" thing but to do things according to their own way, their own understanding.

Lastly, the researcher needed a lot of time to get to know the students before the actual data collection could start. The period of gaining trust from the participants was crucial because only then could the researcher be able to get good data from them. In this initial study, the researcher conducted the activities the first time she went to the school and the first time upon meeting the participants. Although the researcher had explained to the participants her intention of conducting the activities, they were still very suspicious of her real intention. They kept on thinking (and worrying) that the researcher would be evaluating and giving scores on how well they did in their activities, and these marks would be added to their test marks. Although they were assured several times that they would not be graded and the researcher was not looking for the right answers but only their own answers, they were still very hesitant about giving their responses to the questions in the worksheet and wanted to know instead what the "right" answers were. This had also made the researcher realize that, apart from gaining the pupils' trust, she also needed to firstly understand their social and cultural background, and also the school's culture.

Conclusions

This chapter explains the methodology of the study. Case study was chosen as a method to investigate how emergent second language readers use visuals to build on their second language literacy as well as how social and cultural contexts shape emergent second language readers' visual literacy at a selected national primary school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Observation, interview, and document analysis were three main sources of data for this study and these data were analyzed using the constant comparative method.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. The findings of this study are divided into two parts, Part 1 and Part 2. Figure 4.1 is an overview of how the chapter is organized.
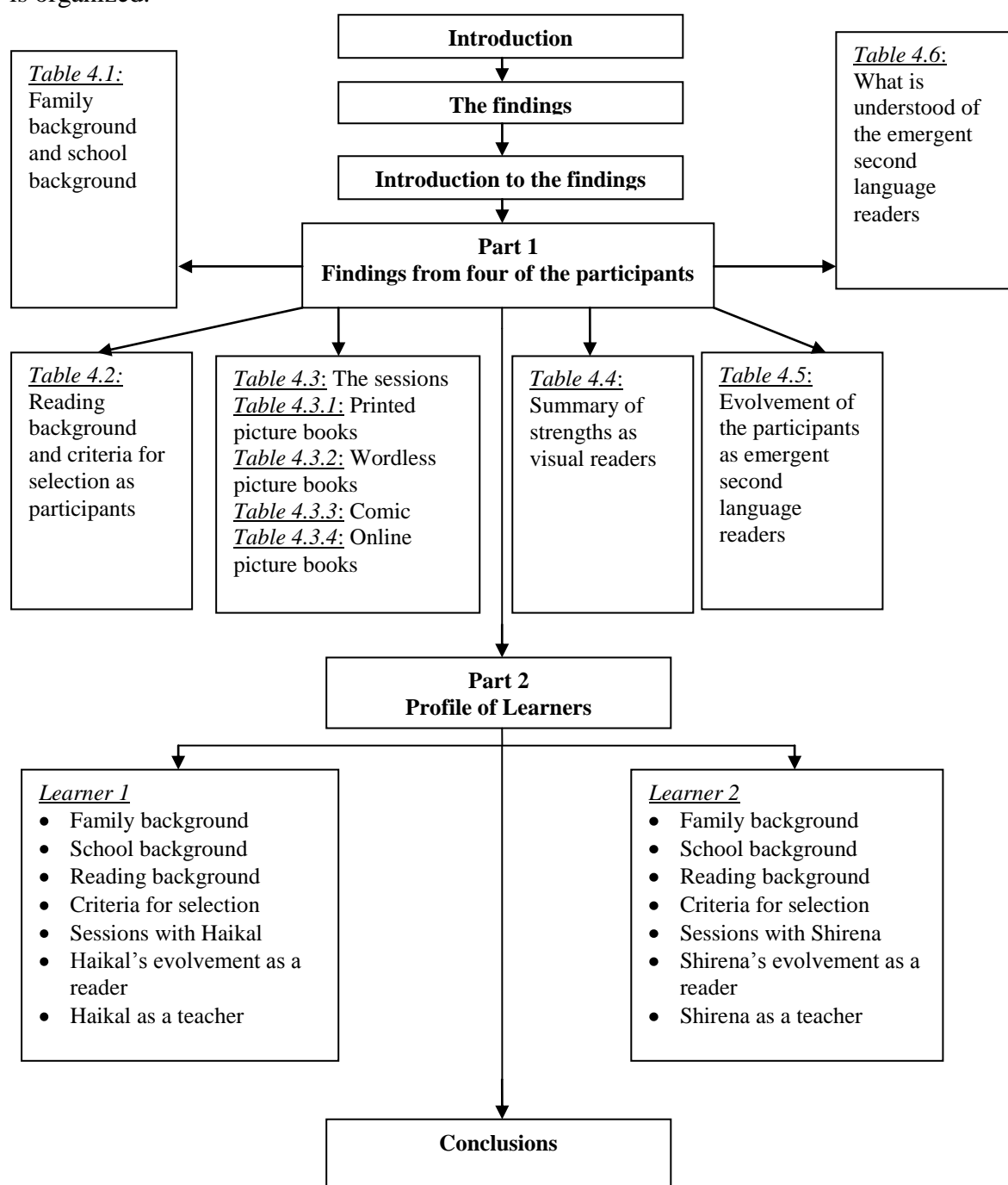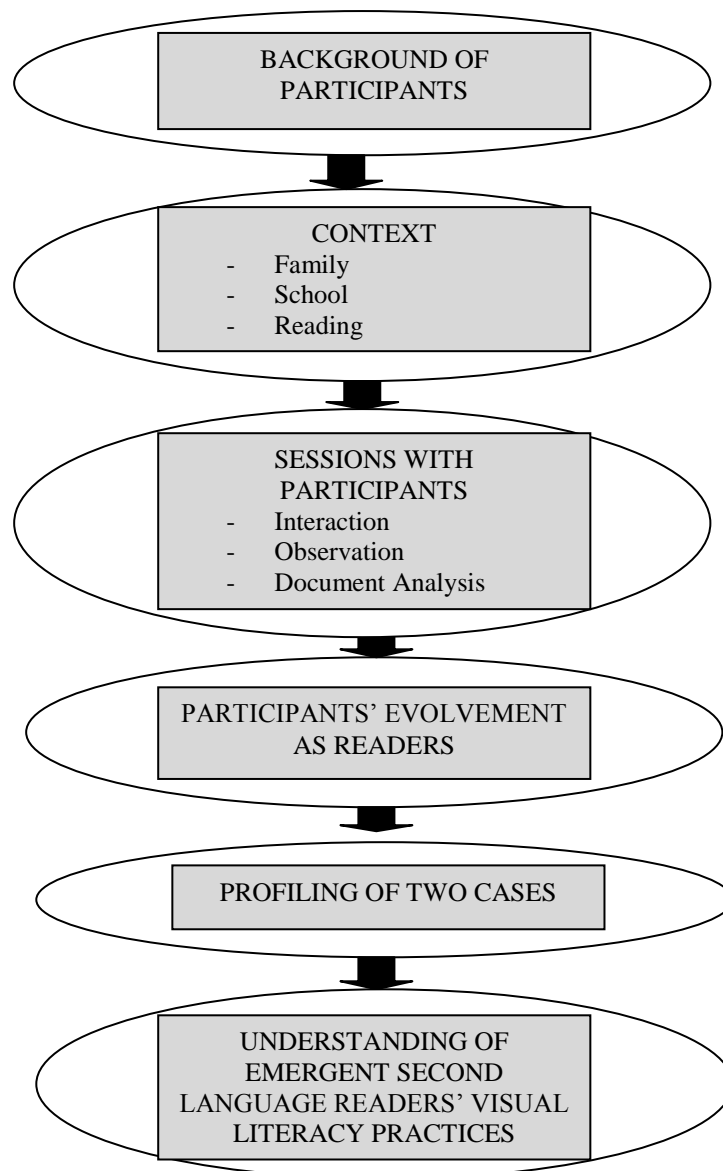

Figure 4.1. Overview of Chapter 4.

Introduction

This study is aimed at gaining understanding of emergent second language readers' visual literacy. This understanding was gained through interaction, observation and document analysis of six emergent second language readers in twelve sessions involving four types of picture books. The understanding of their literacy development journey could be summarized in the following diagram:

BACKGROUND OF
PARTICIPANTS

CONTEXT
- Family
- School
- Reading

SESSIONS WITH
PARTICIPANTS
- Interaction
- Observation
- Document Analysis

PARTICIPANTS' EVOLVEMENT
AS READERS

PROFILING OF TWO CASES

UNDERSTANDING OF
EMERGENT SECOND
LANGUAGE READERS' VISUAL
LITERACY PRACTICES

Figure 4.2. Plan for Study on the Participants' Visual Literacy Development.

As the study is on probing the understanding of emergent second language readers' visual literacy, it is important that the participants of the study were emergent second language readers. Emergent readers are termed as readers who are just beginning to read, where they have varying knowledge of the alphabet, recognize few if any words at sight, and are not able to consistently match speech and print (Bromley, 1992; Clay, 1991; Wood, 2005).

The main criterion for selecting the six participants in the study was they have to be emergent readers. The second criterion was the gender of the students. As literacy behavior and literacy interests of girls and boys have been shown to differ in many previous studies on literacy and gender analysis (Blair & Sanford, 2003; Cohen, 1998; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000; Milliard, 2001; Smith, 2003), the participants must be of two different genders and to ensure some form of balance, the number of boys and girls as the participants of the study was equal. Thus, 3 boys and 3 girls who were emergent readers were selected as participants of the study.

Participant selection in this study also took into consideration the school's categorization of the students' English proficiency according to school-based tests. Out of the six participants, two came from the 'high-level' ability group, the other two came from the 'mid-level' ability group, and the last two came from the 'low-level' group or the KIA2M group. KIA2M stands for *Kelas Intervensi Awal Membaca dan Menulis* (Early Intervention Class for Reading and Writing). In the beginning of the school year, all Year 1 students have to sit for the KIA2M test. It is a centralized screening test developed by the Ministry of Education in 2006 to identify students entering Year 1 who have yet to fully master the basic skills of reading and writing in

the first language (*Bahasa Melayu*). The KIA2M program was developed to ensure that all Year 1 students master the basic skills of reading and writing in *Bahasa Melayu* before they enter Year 2 (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Organization of the Findings

Introduction

The findings from this study are presented in two parts, Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 consists of data from four of the six participants of the study while Part 2 consists of data from two of the six participants. Part 1 discusses the emerging understanding of how emergent second language readers use visuals to build on their second language literacy as well as how social and cultural contexts shape emergent second language readers' visual literacy based on the emerging themes from the findings. Part 2 on the other hand gives a detailed discussion of the main findings from two of the six participants. The two participants were selected as they represented two unique ways of using visuals in the process of making sense of the stories in the four types of picture books used in this study. For the purpose of deeper analysis of the main findings, the profiles of the two emergent second language readers were constructed based on the data obtained from the study.

The process of generating data from the study to develop the emergent understanding and detailed understanding of emergent second language readers' visual literacy is summarized in Figure 4.3.
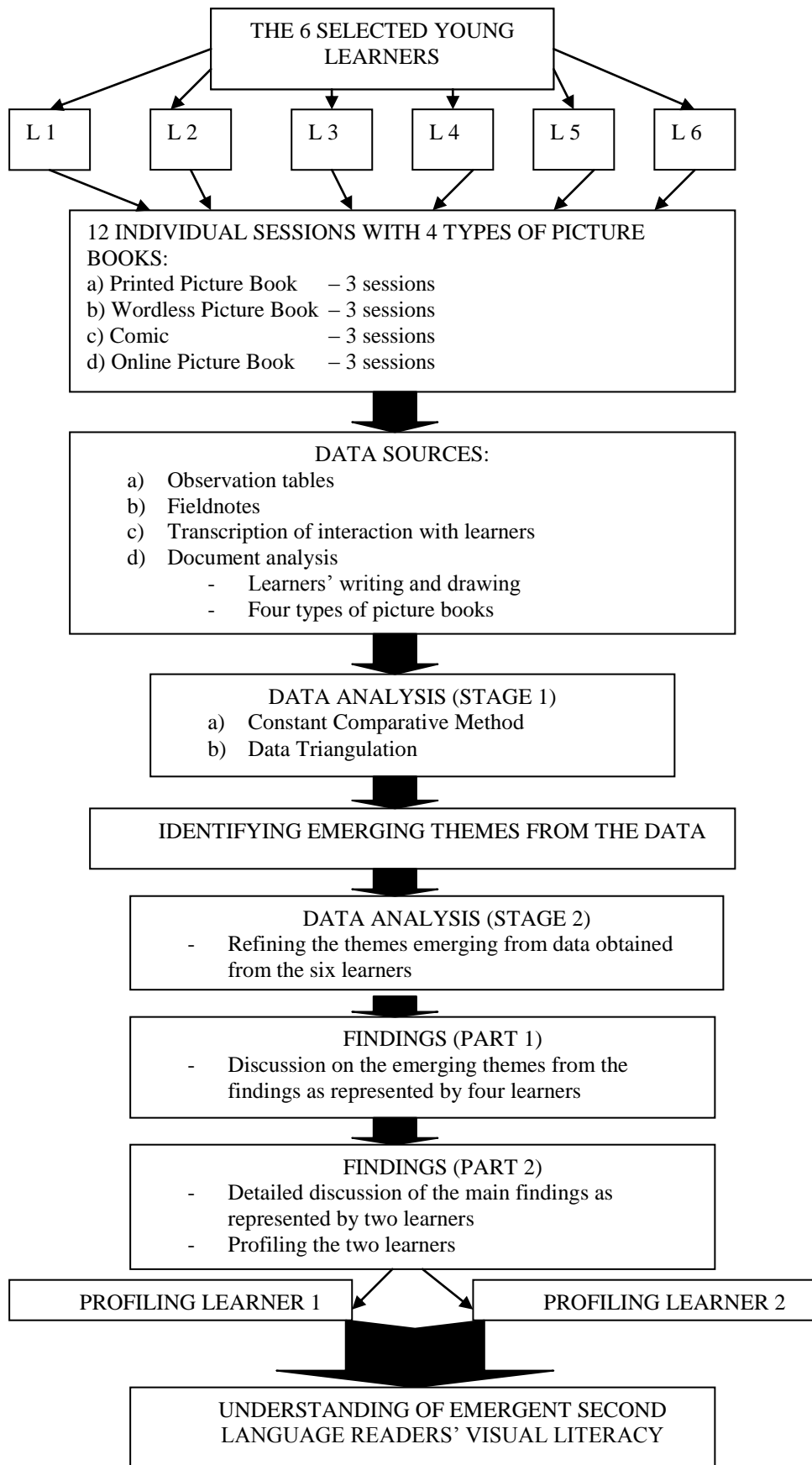
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┌──────────────────────────────┐
│   THE 6 SELECTED YOUNG       │
│        LEARNERS              │
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└─────┘ └─────┘ └─────┘ └─────┘ └─────┘ └─────┘
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12 INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS WITH 4 TYPES OF PICTURE BOOKS:
a) Printed Picture Book   – 3 sessions
b) Wordless Picture Book – 3 sessions
c) Comic   – 3 sessions
d) Online Picture Book   – 3 sessions

DATA SOURCES:
a) Observation tables
b) Fieldnotes
c) Transcription of interaction with learners
d) Document analysis
   -   Learners' writing and drawing
   -   Four types of picture books

DATA ANALYSIS (STAGE 1)
a) Constant Comparative Method
b) Data Triangulation

IDENTIFYING EMERGING THEMES FROM THE DATA

DATA ANALYSIS (STAGE 2)
-   Refining the themes emerging from data obtained from the six learners

FINDINGS (PART 1)
-   Discussion on the emerging themes from the findings as represented by four learners

FINDINGS (PART 2)
-   Detailed discussion of the main findings as represented by two learners
-   Profiling the two learners

┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ PROFILING LEARNER 1   │   │ PROFILING LEARNER 2   │
└─────────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────┘

UNDERSTANDING OF EMERGENT SECOND LANGUAGE READERS' VISUAL LITERACY

Figure 4.3. Process of Generating Data.

Part 1

In this part, the data from four of the participants of the study are analyzed. The data from these four participants are presented in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5. These tables include the context of the participants (family background and school background; reading background and criteria for selection), the sessions conducted with the four participants, evolvement of the participants as readers, and what is understood of the participants' emerging second language visual literacy.

Table 4.1 looks at the four participants' family background and school background. The data for Table 4.1 came from transcription of the sessions with the participants. The data also came from the fieldnotes taken during the data collection period. *(See Appendix A for excerpts of transcriptions and fieldnotes)*

Table 4.1
Family Background and School Background of Participants

Participant	Description
Danial	Danial's father works in a supermarket as a cashier while his mother is a homemaker. He has one elder brother in Year 4 (10 years old) in the same school and a younger brother who is still a baby. He stays in the flat area in a housing area where the school is located. Danial is schooling in School A. At the time of the study, he was in Primary 1 Bestari and he belonged to the KIA2M Group. The students in this group have been identified as needing intensive work in their reading and writing skills.
Nadiah	Nadiah's father is a businessman while her mother works in a bank. Nadiah is the youngest of three siblings. However, she is the only one staying with her parents as the two older brothers stay with her grandparents at a state in the northern part of the country. The brothers only stay with their family during the school holidays. After school, Nadiah stays in a nursery nearby and her parents will pick her up from the nursery after work. Nadia was also schooling in School A and she was also in Primary 1 Bestari class at the time of the study.
Hazeeq	Hazeeq comes from a family of five. He is the second of three siblings. His eldest brother is 12 years old and is in Primary 6. He has another younger brother who is 5 years old. Hazeeq's father works as an architect while the mother works in a bank. When both parents are at work, Hazeeq stays with the maid at home. Similar to Danial and Nadiah, Hazeeq was schooling in Primary A and was also in Primary 1 Bestari class at the time the study was conducted.
Haseena	Both Haseena's parents work in their own watch shop. Haseena is the first of three siblings. When her parents are managing the shop, Haseena stays with the maid in the house. She also has her grandmother living with her. Her other two siblings are 5 and 3 years old and they are not in school yet. At the time of the study, Haseena went to School A and was in Primary 1 Bestari as well.

Summary of family background and school background

Table 4.1 shows that the four participants came from different family backgrounds. Danial came from a lower income family while the other three participants came from middle income families.   Except for Danial, all the participants came from double income families where both parents are working. Thus, three of the participants have other people – caregiver and maids – to take care of them while their parents were at work. All the participants came from a considerably small family, consisting of two parents and 3 siblings. All the four participants went to the same school, School A, and they were also in the same Year 1 class at the time of the study. Danial was identified as needing help with his basic reading and writing skills and was placed in the remedial group (KIA2M group).

Table 4.2 looks at the four participants' reading background and the criteria for selecting them as participants. The data for Table 4.2 came from transcription of the sessions with the participants and the fieldnotes taken during the data collection period.

(See Appendix B for excerpts of transcriptions and fieldnotes)

Table 4.2

Reading Background and Criteria for Selection as Participants

Participant	Reading background and Selection Criteria
Danial	Danial was unable to read in Bahasa Melayu and in the English Language. He was able to identify very few English words in the picture books used during the sessions. He hardly read any books on his own or being read to at home. The only book he mentioned 'reading' was a book on animals and the reason for reading this book was he liked animals. He spent most of his time watching television or playing with his friends at the flat area he was staying at. Danial was selected as the participant of the study as he was considered as an emergent reader as he was able to identify some English words but he was yet to be able to read sentences or texts fluently. Danial was also very responsive to questions and was unafraid to say what he thought. He was not inhibited by the need to give the researcher the 'right' answers.
Nadiah	Nadiah has read some books at the nursery she attended. Her parents hardly read to her but her mother did buy her books, mostly educational based comics, for example *Asuh*. Nadiah was selected as a participant as she was also an emergent second language reader. Nadiah scored 60% in her English examination and her English teacher considered her as having a mid-level proficiency.
Hazeeq	Hazeeq said his favorite book is the 'Tin-Tin' series. When he was younger, his mother used to read to him before he went to bed. Now he tried to read on his own. Although he was already a reader in his first language, he was still considered as an emergent second language reader. This is because he was able to identify some of the English words in the books, but he was yet to be able to read and comprehend all the words in the books. Hazeeq was classified in the high-proficiency group by his English teacher as he obtained 88% in his previous English examination.
Haseena	Haseena was able to recognize a significant number of English words in the picture books. Her mother often read to her at home before she went to bed. Haseena was also an emergent second language reader. Haseena scored 86% in her previous English examination and was considered by her English teacher as having a high proficiency level of English.

Summary of reading background and criteria for selection

The main criterion for selecting the participants was that the participants must be emergent second language readers. The next level of selection was determining the different levels of emergent second language readers. This was determined by looking at their recent English examination results. From these results, two were chosen from the 80-90 percentiles, two from 60-70 percentiles, and the remaining two from the 50-60 percentiles. Hazeeq and Haseena belonged to the 80-90 percentiles and came from a home where reading was viewed as important. Both of them have parents reading to them before going to bed and books were available at home for them to read. Danial and Nadiah however came from a home where they did not have parents reading to them and the availability of books in the home was quite limited. As Danial was able to spend his time after school at home and he had access to television, he spent most of his time watching television after school. This high level of exposure to television programs (especially cartoons and animation) is later reflected in how Danial interpreted the story in the picture books used during the reading sessions.

The sessions

Tables 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, and 4.3.4 describe the sessions the researcher had with four of the participants – Danial, Nadiah, Hazeeq and Haseena – using four types of picture books. The tables also describe the strengths and weaknesses of the four participants as emergent second language readers for each type of picture book. These tables were constructed based on data derived from the transcription of the sessions, the drawing or writing produced by the participants during the sessions, as well as the fieldnotes taken during the data collection period. The summary on all the sessions conducted with the four participants using the four types of picture books is given in Table 4.4. In this table, the strength of the four participants as readers reading the four types of picture books is highlighted.

Printed picture book

Table 4.3.1 describes the sessions with the four participants using printed picture book. The printed picture book selected for this study was *Gorilla* by Anthony Browne. *Gorilla* is a story about a girl who loves gorillas and had a night of adventure with one particular gorilla. The table starts with the description of sessions with Danial, then Nadiah, follow by Hazeeq and Haseena.

Table 4.3.1
Sessions Using Printed Picture Book (`Gorilla' by Anthony Browne)

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Danial	As Danial was not able to recognize many of the words in the picture book, he relied solely on the illustrations in his first attempt to interpret the story in the book. Although he was able to get the gist of the story in the book, he was constantly getting the characters in the book mixed up as only from words, one can have a clearer understanding of the character the illustrations stood for. Nevertheless, when the words were read out for him, he was able to comprehend some of the words and connect these words to the illustrations. This resulted in him having a better understanding of the story. At the end of the session with this book, he was able to recall the story in the book orally when prompted but he very much made the story his own by providing context which was more familiar to him. *(see Appendix C for excerpts of transcription of the sessions)*	Danial was not afraid to attempt to interpret the visuals and he was good at using the visuals to deduce the story in the picture book. It was evidenced that his interpretations of visuals were very much influenced by the social and cultural contexts that he belongs to as well as the kind of visuals that he has been exposed prior to the sessions.	In Danial's attempt to understand the story in the picture book, he relied solely on visuals. He did not even attempt to read the words in the picture book at all. Due to this, he at times got the characters all mixed up as only from words is one able to have a clearer idea of the characters in the book.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Nadiah	In the first session with this book, Nadiah was able to describe the pictures on the cover and related them to the title of the book. She was able to recognize some of the words in the book but was yet to observe any evidence of her being able to link the words and the illustrations to develop better understanding of the story in the book. In the second session, she was able to better describe the illustrations in the book and was able to see the connection between one illustration and another in forming the story in the book. In addition, she could now see how the words could help her to better understand the characters in the story. In the last session with this book, Nadiah drew pictures of a girl, trees, moon and sky and was able to relate these pictures to the story in the book although at times she got the sequence of the story mixed up. It was observed she would recall the scene which was most significant to her, for example, she recalled the gorilla eating the banana first before moving on to the gorilla's trip to the zoo. This could be due to the timing of this particular session in which it was nearing lunch time and she probably could only think of food before anything else at this particular time. *(see Appendix C for excerpts of transcription of the sessions)*	Although Nadiah relied heavily on the visuals, she also paid attention to the words in the picture book. She eventually used these two sources of information to have a better understanding of the story in the picture book.	Nadiah at times was too engrossed in her own world that instead of relating what she knows to the story in the picture book, she only focused on what she knows. She needed a lot of prompting before she could relate the context that she was in to the context in the picture book.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Hazeeq	Hazeeq was able to describe the illustrations in the book quite well. He was able to read and understand most of the words in the book. However, when asked to tell the story in the book, he relied heavily on the illustrations rather than words. Only when he was asked questions which he could not get the answers from the illustrations, he would search for the answers in the words. In the last session with this book, Hazeeq was at first a bit reluctant to draw or write what he understood of the story. He said that he did not know how to do it. He was reassured that he would not be graded and I was not looking at whether he could draw or not. Still, he looked a bit worried so I asked him if he would like to see the book and he eagerly said 'yes'. Hazeeq drew a picture of a gorilla and later told me it was the gorilla in the story. When he was asked to recall the story, he did it mostly based on his recall of the illustrations in the book. It could be observed that in order to get the general outline of the story, Hazeeq recalled from illustrations but when probed for details, he recalled from the words in the book. *(see Appendix C for excerpts of transcription of the sessions)*	Hazeeq was able to use all the sources in the book to better understand the story. He relied on visuals for general understanding of the story and he referred to words for retrieving specific information about the story which could not be obtained from visuals only.	Although Hazeeq relied on visuals to have a general understanding of the book, he still believes that the story of the book is in the words. Thus his interpretation of visuals was very much confined by his understanding of the words.

Participant	Description of Session	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Haseena	Haseena was able to recognize a significant number of words in the book. However, this did not really help her to better comprehend the story in the book. She was able to read aloud the words, but she did not quite know what they meant. In addition, she did not try to relate the words that she read to the illustrations in the book. She basically relied on her ability to read aloud the words in order to comprehend the book and although it appeared she was able to 'read' the book, she was having difficulty comprehending the story in the book. In the last session with the book, it was at first quite difficult to get Haseena to write or draw what she had understood of the story in the book. After much reassurance that she would not be evaluated on whatever output she provided in the session, she decided to write 7 words which she copied from the picture book. When asked what the words were, she was not able to say anything at first. After much prompting, she was able to recall the story. Ironically, most of her recall was based on visual recall rather than word recall. *(see Appendix C for excerpts of transcription of the sessions)*	Haseena was able to recognize almost all the words in the book and was able to read aloud these words.	Haseena hardly paid any attention to the visuals. She relied solely on the words that she has read aloud to make sense of the story in the picture book. However, she did not understand most of the words that she could read aloud and she was struggling to understand the story in the picture book.

Wordless picture books

Table 4.3.2 describes the sessions with the four participants using wordless picture book. The wordless picture book selected for this study was *Flotsam* by David Weisner. This book has no words but only illustrations for readers to "read" the story in the book. The table starts with the description of sessions with Danial. This is followed by description of sessions with Nadiah, Hazeeq and Haseena.

Table 4.3.2

Sessions Using Wordless Picture Book ('Flotsam' by David Weisner)

Participant	Description of Session	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Danial	As the session started, Danial was able to describe quite well the illustrations in the book. He also constantly related his background knowledge to his description of the illustrations. As this book has no words, he was less hesitant in his description of the illustrations as well as his interpretations of the story. However, at the end of the session when Danial was asked to either write or draw what he understood as the story in the wordless picture book, he drew something which did not entirely reflect the story in the book. In the case of this book, he drew a picture of a shark, fish and crocodile. The picture of fish could be related to the story but a shark and a crocodile did not exist in the book but it could be related on the basis that these animals do live in the water and in the case of crocodile, in water and land. Nevertheless, when asked to recall the story in the picture book based on the picture that he drew, he was able to do so. *(see Appendix D for excerpts of transcription of the sessions)*	Danial was able to relate the illustrations with his background knowledge on the context of the story.	When Danial was asked to reflect on what he understood of the story in words or visuals, he would just draw whatever he wanted to at that time.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Nadiah	In the first session using this book, Nadiah was able to describe the illustrations in the book and she was able to relate the scene at the beach with her previous experience at the beach. She claimed that she liked this book better than the earlier one as this book has no words. As this book has no words, in the second session, instead of focusing more on how the illustrations were connected to one another to form the story in the book, Nadiah at times would divert her description of the illustrations to her own personal experience. This experience however was not necessarily all connected to the story in the book. In this context, Nadiah saw the sessions as an opportunity for her to talk about herself. Being an only child at home and having parents working long hours, she might have not had much time talking to her parents at home and thus having the need to talk about her life most of the time in the sessions instead of about the story in the book. Nevertheless, at the end of the session where Nadiah was required to express her understanding of the story through drawing or writing, she was able to do so with a drawing. Nadiah drew pictures of a fish, a boy, a camera, the seat, a bucket and a shovel. All these items were present in the book and later she was able to explain her drawing in connection to the story in the book. *(see Appendix D for excerpts of transcription of the sessions and drawing produced by Nadiah)*	Nadiah was able to connect the illustrations in the picture book to deduce the story in the book.	Nadiah had the tendency to divert her description of the illustrations to her own personal experience. This experience however was not necessarily connected to the story of the book. She just liked to tell stories about her life and if asked to go back to the story in the book, at times, she would appear bored.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Hazeeq	Hazeeq was able to describe the illustrations in the book but he struggled to describe the ones that he had no or little background knowledge in. For example, the illustrations of a boy taking out the film from the camera and sending the film for processing was a bit difficult for him to describe as well as comprehend without help. In the second session, Hazeeq was able to describe the detail of the story quite well. Hazeeq was able to describe the 'core' of the story and would sometimes leave out the 'sub-plot' of the story. In the last session, Hazeeq drew a picture of a crab. When asked if this was the crab from the story, he said 'yes'. When asked what the crab did in the story, he said 'nothing'. When asked why he drew the crab, he said because he liked to eat crab. But when asked to recall the story from the point where the boy in the story found a crab, he was able to do so. However, as in the earlier session, he only recalled the main plot in the story and not the sub-plots of the story. *(see Appendix D for Observation Tables of the sessions)*	From all the illustrations in the wordless picture book, Hazeeq was able to know which of the illustrations represent the gist of the story.	As this book has no words and Hazeeq relied on words to confirm his initial interpretation of the visuals, Hazeeq struggled to describe visuals in which he has no background knowledge.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Haseena	As this book has no words, Haseena had no choice but to focus on the illustrations. She was not very enthusiastic about the idea 'reading' a book through the visuals only. Thus, it was challenging to get her to say anything about the illustrations in the book. Her usual answer to any questions posted to her about the illustrations in the book would be 'I don't know'. She also claimed she did not know many of the animals in the book. For example, she said she did not know the animals 'turtle' and 'penguin'. In the last session using this book, Haseena only took less than 5 minutes to draw a picture of a boy. When asked to name the picture that she drew, she said a 'boy' and refused to elaborate further. A lot of prompting needed to be done with her in order to get her to say more than one word. Haseena too was not able to see the connection between one illustration to the other in relation to the story in the book. *(see Appendix D for excerpts of transcription of the sessions and drawing produced by Haseena)*	As Haseena felt that reading is all about reading aloud words, a book without words forced her to pay attention to the illustrations to deduce the story in the book.	Haseena found this book very challenging to read because her understanding of reading is reading words. Thus when there were no words to read and only visuals to deduce meaning from, Haseena not only found it difficult, she also did not find it interesting.

Comic

Table 4.3.3 describes the sessions with the four participants using comic. The comic selected for this study was *Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd* by Bill Matheny. The comic consisted of illustrations and words presented in speech bubbles. *Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd* is about two gophers who found magic beans that grew into a huge beanstalk. The story was based on the famous children's story 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. The table starts with the description of sessions with Danial, then Nadiah, Hazeeq and Haseena.

Table 4.3.3
Sessions Using Comic (`Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd' by Bill Matheny)

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Danial	Danial said he has never read a comic before and this was evident in the first session using the comic genre. Danial was not able to focus his eyes on the many illustrations on a page according to the right sequence. He needed to be guided in looking at the sequence of the illustrations and if this was not done, he would jump from one illustration to the other. Only with guidance was he able to see the connection between one illustration to the other and eventually managed to get the gist of the story in the comic book. Through a lot of prompting also, it could be observed that Danial could see the relationship between illustrations and words. At the end of the session, when asked to recall the story in the comic, Danial did it like the way he read the comic – without the right sequence. He would recall one event and later recalled an event which happened earlier. Eventually, he was not able to really remember the beginning and ending of the story. *(see Appendix E for Observation Tables of the sessions)*	One of Danial's favourite past times was to watch cartoon shows on television. In trying to read the comic, he likened it to watching the cartoon shows on television. He moved very quickly from one illustration to the other and from one page to the other, focusing not so much on the story rather the movement and the sounds the characters were supposedly making.	As Danial had never read comics before, he was unable to focus his eyes on the many illustrations on a page according to the right sequence. Danial would jump from one illustration to the other. Only with guidance was he able to see the connection between one illustration to the other and eventually managed to get the gist of the story in the comic book.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Nadiah	Nadiah was able to describe all the illustrations in the comic book and connect them to form a story. She was not able to read any of the words in this session but there was occasional reference to words that refer to sound (for example, 'boom').

In the second session she was able to better understand the illustrations in connection to the storyline in the comic book. Nevertheless, she still needed guidance on moving according to the right sequence when she was 'reading' the comic book.

In the final session, Nadiah drew pictures of a tall tree reaching to the clouds and the two gophers climbing the tree. From the drawing Nadiah was able to relate to the story in the comic.

(see Appendix E for excerpts of transcription of the sessions) | Nadiah was able to describe all the illustrations in the comic book and connect them to form a story. Although she was not able to read most of the words in the speech bubbles, she attempted to relate the ones that she knew to the illustrations to have a better understanding of the story in the comic book. | Nadiah needed guidance on moving according to the right sequence when she was 'reading' the comic book. As there were several illustrations in a page, there was a tendency for her to jump from one illustration to the other without the right order. |

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Hazeeq	In the first session, Hazeeq was able to know which was the title of the comic book and was able to read the title. But when he was asked the meaning of the title, he said he did not know. This was also evident in the second session when he was asked if he could read the words in the book; he was able to do so but when asked what he had read, he also said he did not know. He preferred to use the illustrations to comprehend the story in the book. Only when he was unable to see the story in the illustrations would he search the words in his effort to comprehend the story. In the last session, Hazeeq drew a picture of what he referred to as the 'squirrel'. When asked why he chose to draw the squirrel instead of other characters in the story, he said because the squirrel was the 'good' character in the story. When asked what the squirrel did in the story, then Hazeeq started to recall the story from the beginning until the end without much prompting. Without referring to the comic, Hazeeq was able to recall the story quite well. This recall was very much based on the visual input in the comic book rather than the words. *(see Appendix E for Observation Tables of the sessions)*	Hazeeq was able to use illustrations as well as words to deduce the story in the comic. He knew which source to use in order for him to get the needed information. For instance if he needed to know the gist of the story in the comic, he would use the illustrations to get this information. Only when he was not able to see the story in the illustrations would he search the words in his effort to comprehend the story.	Hazeeq was able to read aloud the words but he was unable to understand what the words meant in relation to the story in the comic.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Haseena	Haseena was able to interpret the illustrations according to her own understanding. However, she treated the illustrations as an individual entity, thus she could not see the story in the illustrations. Her description of the illustrations was basically segmented from one illustration to the other. Nevertheless, with a lot of prompting, she was able to see the story in the illustrations. Haseena was able to read aloud some of the words in the comic book but as in the earlier sessions using the other types of picture book, she was unable to show much comprehension in the words that she had read aloud. At the end of the session, Haseena drew a picture of the 'giant' in the story and the reason for choosing to draw this character was the other characters in the book were too difficult to draw. When asked to relate her drawing to the story, she was able to do so but with a lot of prompting. Haseena also wrote the word 'jayin' on top of her drawing. When asked to read the word, she read it as 'giant'. She is using her understanding of letter-sound relationship in her first language (Bahasa Melayu) to spell the word 'giant'. *(see Appendix E for Observation Tables of the sessions and drawing produced by Haseena)*	Haseena attempted to interpret the illustrations in the book. She tried to interpret the illustrations according to her own understanding.	Haseena treated the illustrations as an individual entity, thus she could not see the story in the illustrations. Haseena's description of the illustrations was basically segmented from one illustration to the other Haseena was able to read aloud some of the words in the comic book but like the earlier session using other types of picture book, she was not able to show much comprehension in the words that she had read aloud.

Online picture books

Table 4.3.4 describes the sessions with the four participants using online picture book. The online picture book selected for this study was *The Little Red Hen* by Michael Ramirez from the Starfall webpage (www.starfall.com). The selected online picture book was taken from the Children's Literature Development Project's (ChiLD) website (http://projectchild.net). This book has visual (words and illustrations) as well as audio input. The table starts with the description of sessions with Danial, then Nadiah, Hazeeq and Haseena.

Table 4.3.4

Sessions Using Online Picture Book (The Little Red Hen by Michael Ramirez)
(Starfall.com)

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Danial	In the first session using this book, as Danial was not able to recognize a lot of English words, he instantly relied on the illustrations to tell the story in the online picture book. Nevertheless, with prompting and with the help of illustrations, he was able to recognize some of the words in the book towards the end of the first session. In the second session, with the help from the audio input in the book, he was more confident reading the words in the book by himself and this helped him to better comprehend the words that he recognized in the first session. At the end of the session, Danial finally drew something that was related to the story in the online picture book and related his drawing to the story in the book. Nevertheless, when this was done he asked for another paper to draw something which he said had no relation to the story in the book (he drew pictures of a ship, airplane and tank) *(see Appendix F for excerpts of transcription of the sessions and drawing produced by Danial)*	As Danial was not able to recognize a lot of the words in the online picture book, he relied on his understanding of the illustrations in the book. Like other sessions with the other types of picture books, illustrations were Danial's first source of information in deducing the story in the book. As this picture book has audio as another source of information apart from illustrations and words, Danial was able to use this source in addition to illustrations to have a better understanding of the story.	At times Danial still felt reluctant to even attempt to comprehend the words for fear of making mistakes. Although Danial seemed to be slightly more confident in attempting to comprehend the words in the books as compared to the earlier sessions with him, without the constant assurance and support he would still have that fear of making mistakes.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Nadiah	Unlike other participants in this study, Nadiah did not show much enthusiasm when she saw the laptop in the room. With a lot of prompting, Nadiah was able to relate the story with the help of illustrations in the book. In the second session, Nadiah was able to use illustrations to help her recognize and comprehend some of the words in the book. In the last session using this genre of picture book, Nadiah drew pictures of fish and fishing rod on one paper, on another paper, she drew pictures of trees, house and muffins. On the third paper, she drew pictures of a house and muffins. Although hesitant to explain her drawings, with a lot of prompting, she was able to relate the drawings to the story in the book. *(see Appendix F for excerpts of transcription of the sessions)*	Nadia was able to use the illustrations in the picture book to help her recognize and comprehend some of the words in the book. Her understanding of the story was much enhanced by her having to link the illustrations and the words in the book. This understanding was reflected in her drawing at the end of the third sessions using this type of picture book.	As Nadiah did not find much enthusiasm in reading a picture book online, she needed to be given a lot of prompting before she was able to focus on the illustrations and the words in the book.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Hazeeq	Hazeeq was familiar with using a laptop as he had a laptop at home which he merely used for playing games online. I went through the book page by page with him. When asked about the story in the book, much of Hazeeq's understanding of the story was based on what he understood from the sentences in the book. Nevertheless, there were times when he would rely on the illustrations to know the meaning of the word. For example, the word 'goose' he said he knew the meaning by looking at the illustration in the book. In the last session with the online picture book, Hazeeq drew a picture of three muffins on a blue plate. He was then able to relate those three muffins to the whole story in the book. Hazeeq found the online picture book the easiest to understand and the one he liked the most as compared to the earlier three types of picture books. *(see Appendix F for excerpts of fieldnotes)*	Hazeeq was very familiar with the handling of a laptop, thus he found having to read a book from a laptop instead of just playing games interesting. Although he was able to recognize most of the words in the picture book, he still relied on illustrations to help him understand meaning of words which he did not know.	Hazeeq at times found it difficult to express his understanding through writing or drawing. He preferred to recall the story verbally in his first language.

Participant	Description of Sessions	Strength as reader	Weakness as reader
Haseena	As Haseena was able to read aloud most of the words in the book, she assumed she could comprehend the story in the book. However, this was not evident in her attempt to relate the words that she had read aloud to the story in the book. At times, she did not really know the meaning of words that she had read aloud. She would also usually ignore the visual input in the book in her effort to comprehend the words and the story in the book. Due to this, although it seemed that she was able to 'read' the book much better than the other participants in this study, her understanding of the story was no better and at times less than the participants who were not able to read aloud most of the words in the book. For example, she was able to read aloud the sentence 'the muffins taste yummy' but when asked for the meaning of the word 'yummy', she said 'not nice'. Only when she was asked to look at the visual that came together with the sentence and with much prompting, she was able to say that the word 'yummy' means 'it tastes good'. Haseena therefore, needed to have a lot of prompting in her effort to interpret the story and this prompting was usually focused on her relating the textual input to the visual input to better comprehend the story in the book. In the last session, Haseena wrote 'he said no, eat he shae'. When asked what the sentence meant, she said 'the hen said no, you cannot eat and she don't want to share'. Here, it was observed again, Haseena using her knowledge of letter-sound relationship in her first language to spell the word 'share'. *(see Appendix F for Observation Tables of the sessions)*	Haseena was able to read aloud almost all the words in the online picture book. She was able to relate her understanding of sound-letter relationship in her first language in her reading of the second language.	Haseena assumed she could comprehend the story in the book based solely on words she was able to read aloud. However, this was not evident in her attempt to relate the words that she had read aloud to the story in the book. She did not really know the meaning of words that she had read aloud. In addition, she usually ignored the visual input in the book in her effort to comprehend the words and the story in the book. This resulted in her being less able to comprehend the story in the book as compared to the other learners.

Summary on the strengths of the participants as visual readers

Table 4.4 shows the summary of strengths of the participants of the study as visual readers. This summary is derived from the description of the sessions conducted with the four participants using the four types of picture books (Tables 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.4). The table shows the strength of each of the participant according to the type of picture books that they have read. The table starts with printed picture book, follow by wordless picture book, comic and online picture book.

Table 4.4

Summary of Participants' Strengths as Visual Readers (Printed Picture Book)

Names/ Types of book	Danial	Nadiah	Hazeeq	Haseena
Printed picture book	Illustration was the main source of information for Danial. In all 12 sessions with him using the four types of picture books, Danial would look at the illustrations first in his effort to comprehend the stories in the picture books. Interpreting illustrations was something that Danial found easier as he felt he was not restricted to giving the right or the wrong answers. It was observed that the main reason he refused to even attempt to comprehend the words in the book was the fear of making mistakes or giving the 'wrong' answers.	Nadiah used visuals as her primary source of information in her effort to make meaning out of the picture book. Nadiah interpreted the visuals based on her background knowledge on the visuals. This means relating the visuals to her everyday experiences – her home, family, school and other situations in her life.	At the end of the 12 sessions, Hazeeq was aware of the sources in the books in which he could use in his effort to make meaning out of the picture books. Although Hazeeq was able to recognize most of the words in the picture books, he still relied heavily on visuals when he was asked to recall the story in the picture book. Only when he was not able retrieve specific information from the visuals that he started to search the information from the words in the books. Hazeeq basically used the visuals to have an assumption of what the story was all about and later use the information he retrieved from the words to confirm or disconfirm his assumption.	Haseena believes that the story of a book comes from the words and not the illustrations. Thus her focus was always on trying to read aloud the words in the books. By doing this she was not paying much attention to the illustrations in the books. This however, resulted to her finding it more difficult to understand the story in the picture book

Table 4.4 (Continued): *Summary of Strengths as Visual Readers (Wordless Picture Book)*

Names/ Types of book	Danial	Nadiah	Hazeeq	Haseena
Wordless picture book	As this picture book has no words, Danial felt it was easier for him to 'read' this book as compared to the printed picture book. Danial interpreted the visuals in the picture books based on his background knowledge on the context that the visuals were presented in. Danial's interpretations of the visuals were first segmented but towards the end of the three sessions, he was able to connect one visual to the other to make sense of the story in the book	Nadiah loves to talk about her life and she was able to relate the visuals to her everyday's life. In the beginning, she was more focused on how the visuals were related to her life but towards the end of the sessions her focus has shifted to the story and used her background knowledge on the visuals to better understand the story in the book.	In the beginning, Hazeeq found the book challenging because he had only illustrations to deduce the story in the book. He did not have words to confirm his deduction. In the sessions using this worldless picture book, it could be seen that his interpretations of the illustrations and the story in the book were solely based on his background knowledge of the illustrations in the book. Thus it could be seen that he was struggling to interpret the illustrations which he had less knowledge in.	As Haseena believes that the story in a book is from the words, it was difficult for her to see the illustrations in the book as also a source of information for her to comprehend the story in the book. Haseena needed to be helped to focus on the illustrations and to relate the illustrations to her background knowledge in order for her to have a better comprehension of the story.

Table 4.4 (Continued): *Summary of Strengths as Visual Readers (Comic)*

Names/ Types of book	Danial	Nadiah	Hazeeq	Haseena
Comic	In reading a comic, Danial focused on not only the illustrations but the 'sound effect' as well. Danial was aware of how the illustrations were conveying actions that came with sound effect. This could also be influenced by the fact that Danial loves to watch cartoon shows on television	Nadiah has read comic before so she was able to have a better understanding of how the illustrations in comic were laid out in a page. Nadiah was able to connect one illustration to the other in the right sequence. Although she was not able to read and understand most of the words in the speech bubbles, she was able to use the illustrations to comprehend the story in the book.	Hazeeq was able to use illustrations as well as words to deduce the story in the comic. He knew which source to use in order for him to get what kind of information. For instance if he needed to know the gist of the story in the comic, he would use the illustrations to get this information. Only when he was not able to see the story in the illustrations, he would search the words in his effort to comprehend the story.	Haseena was able to interpret the illustrations according to her own understanding. However, she treated the illustrations as an individual entity, thus she could not see the story in the illustrations.

Her description of the illustrations was basically segmented from one illustration to the other. Nevertheless, with a lot of prompting, she was able to see the story in the illustrations. |

Table 4.4 (Continued): *Summary of Strengths as Visual Readers (Online Picture Book)*

Names/ Types of book	Danial	Nadiah	Hazeeq	Haseena
Online picture book	As Danial was not able to recognize a lot of the words in the online picture book, he relied on his understanding of the illustrations in the book. Like other sessions with the other types of picture books, illustrations were Danial first source of information in deducing the story in the book. As this picture book has audio as another source of information apart from illustrations and words, Danial was able to use this source in addition to illustrations to have a better understanding of the story.	Nadia was able to use the illustrations in the picture book to help her recognize and comprehend some of the words in the book. Her understanding of the story was much enhanced by her having to link the illustrations and the words in the book. This understanding was reflected in her drawing at the end of the third sessions using this type of picture book.	Hazeeq was very familiar with the handling of a laptop, thus he found having to read a book from a laptop instead of just playing games interesting. Although he was able to recognize most of the words in the picture book, he still relied on illustrations to help him understand meaning of words which he did not know.	Haseena's main focus was always the words in the book. This however did not help her much in understanding the story in the book. Haseena therefore, needed to have a lot of prompting in her effort to interpret the story and this prompting was usually focused on her relating the textual input to the visual input to better comprehend the story in the book.

Evolvement of the participants as emergent second language readers

Table 4.5 looks at the evolvement of the participants as emergent second language readers. This table describes the changes the participants went through as emergent second language readers from the beginning of the sessions until the end of the twelve sessions the researcher had with them. The data for this table came from transcription of sessions with the participants, the fieldnotes taken during the sessions as well as document analysis of the drawings or the writings that were produced by the participants in the sessions. *(See Appendix G for excerpts of fieldnotes)*

Table 4.5
Participants' Evolvement as Readers

Danial	In the beginning, Danial relied solely on the illustrations to deduce the story in the picture books. The choice to do this was not merely based on his inability to comprehend most of the words in the book, rather he was scared if he tried to do so, he would make 'mistakes'. Mistakes in his context were something that a student should not do and the way to avoid making mistakes was to not attempt to read at all. Illustrations on the other hand, were more subjective. They were more open to interpretation and the possibility of making 'mistakes' is lesser according to his understanding. Thus he was more willing to interpret the story based on his understanding of the illustrations in the book. As the sessions progressed and with a lot of prompting and assurance, Danial was able to use illustrations in his effort to comprehend the meaning of words in the text. He was able to see that he could use the illustrations as a source of information for him to deduce meaning of words in the picture books. With the online picture book, he was able to add on to his source of information from only visual to visual and audio and this has helped him further in seeing the connection between the visual, sound and words and eventually resulted in better comprehension of the book. This has also created a sense of independence in the learner in choosing which source of information to use in his effort to be literate.

Nadiah	In the beginning of the session, although Nadiah was able to recognize almost half of the words in the book, she preferred to comprehend the story in the picture books through her interpretations of the illustrations. However, these interpretations were very much based on her own context and not the context of the story. As the sessions progressed, prompts were given for her to focus her attention to the visuals as well as the words. Nadiah was able to make the connection between the illustrations and words in relation to the story in the book. This comprehension was reflected not only in her oral recall of the story but also her visual recall of the story.
Hazeeq	Hazeeq was able to read and comprehend almost 80% of the words in the picture books. However, when asked to recall the story in the books, his recall was very much based on the visuals instead of the text in the book. Only when he was asked to provide details in the story which could not be obtained from the illustrations would he seek the text in the book for the answers. This was evident throughout the sessions conducted with him.

He found wordless picture book the most challenging as the words had only one source of information – the illustrations – and no words to confirm his interpretations of the visuals. Thus he had to rely solely on his background knowledge in order to interpret the illustrations as well as the story. He found online picture book the easiest to read due to the multiple sources of information available in the book. Thus in his quest to comprehend the book, he could use one source of information to help him with another source of information in the book and ultimately he achieved better comprehension of the story in the picture books. |
| Haseena | Haseena's main focus in the sessions was to be able to sound out the words in the picture books. She was able to sound out a significant number of words in the picture books and being able to do this, she did not see any importance in focusing on the illustrations in the book. Although she was able to sound out most of the words, she was not able to comprehend the meaning of most of those words or to relate those words with the story in the books. Through prompting, Haseena was made to see the connections between the words and the illustrations and how this connection could help her to better comprehend the words and the story in the picture books. Towards the end of the session, after much prompting, questioning and reassuring, she was able to see that she did not have to solely focus on the words, she could instead use all the sources of information in the books to gain better understanding of the story. |

Summary of evolvement as readers

On the whole, in the beginning of the sessions the learners relied on only one source of information in the picture books in order to comprehend the stories in the four types of picture books. Danial and Nadiah were relying on the visuals only while Haseena was only focusing on the words. However, at the end of the twelve sessions it could be observed that these young learners have evolved from using only one source of information to using all sources of information that they could get from the picture books. This finding is reflected in Clay's (1991) claim that teaching students to read by utilizing only one source of information is actually limiting their opportunity to discover other sources available to make sense of text, and that "many sources of cues allow for confirming check and act as stimulus to error correction" (p. 311). Danial and Nadiah who relied on visuals only in the beginning of the sessions to interpret the stories in the picture books have used visuals to better understand the meaning of words in the picture books. This link that they were able to make enabled them to have a better understanding of the stories as well as propelled them to the understanding that reading does not have to start with words. Haseena on the other hand who believed that reading is all about reading words was made to realize that she could use visuals to help her understand the meaning of words and eventually attain better understanding of the stories in the picture books. In this context, the young learners started reading at a point where they were at instead of what they were assumed to be at. Here, the reading starts where the learner is and not where the teacher is.

What is understood of the emergent second language readers

Table 4.6 discusses what can be understood of the emergent second language readers based on the sessions the researcher had with them as well as the social and cultural contexts that the participants belong to. This discussion is based on the data from transcription of sessions with the participants, the fieldnotes taken during the sessions as well as document analysis of the drawings or the writings produced by the participants in the sessions. *(See Appendix H for excerpts of fieldnotes and observation tables).*

Table 4.6
What is Understood of the Emergent Second Language Readers

Danial	Danial was a typical young boy who found cartoons and video games much more interesting that the words in the book. His world was a world of visual and fast action and to be asked to assimilate in a school culture where he was required to sit still all the time and to read and write words was something he was having trouble adjusting to. In addition he was placed in a group which was labeled as not possessing the basic reading and writing skills. This further isolated him from the school culture. Nevertheless, by focusing on what he was good at (interpreting visuals), and using this for him to acquire better knowledge in words, Danial was more confident and more motivated in his quest to become literate in the second language.
Nadiah	Nadiah liked to be engaged orally and the ability to convey to other people of her experience on a topic or anything that was happening on her daily life was something she loved to do. Nevertheless, it was not that easy to engage her with the story in the picture books used in the session as she liked to talk more about her experiences outside the school. Only by asking her to relate the story in the picture books to her life experiences, she was then more interested in the story in the books. Eventually, this has helped her to better understand the visuals, words and story in the picture book.
Hazeeq	Although Hazeeq was able to recognize more words in the picture books as compared to the other participants, he still needed the visuals to help him to better comprehend the words that he had recognized as well as the story in the text. As visuals are easier to remember as compared to words, it could be seen in the case of Hazeeq where although he was able to read most of the words in the picture books, he still relied heavily on illustrations when asked to recall the story in the books.

Haseena	Haseena is a product of a learner who had gone through a method of teaching (as well as a curriculum) that focused much on the ability to decode the sound and letter relationships and to equate this ability with the ability to read. Haseena in the beginning simply refused to use other sources of information (in the case of this study, visual and audio) in her quest to comprehend the story. She believed that by being able to sound out most of the words in the picture books, she was actually able to 'read' the books. Haseena belonged to the group where the score of the English language examination was between 80 -100% and she was considered by her English teacher as a good student of English language. As the testing at this stage focused very much on the sound and letter relationship, Haseena having to do well in the test was considered as a good student. However, this was not the case when she was asked to comprehend the words that she had 'read'. She was not only unable to comprehend the words, she was not able to see the words in the context of the story.

Summary of what is understood of the learners

Danial and Nadiah related the visuals in the picture books with their lives. Their social and cultural backgrounds have a strong influence on how they perceived and interpreted the visuals in the picture books. If we see reading the picture books as a process of inquiry then we would understand why these young learners did not see the illustrations or the words in the picture book as merely pictures and words. They saw them as how they were connected and located into their lives. Rogers and Schofield (2005) believed that in the view of social theorists, texts used in daily life do not assume an autonomous life of their own; instead in understanding how people interpret texts, one has to examine how the texts fit into the practices of people's lives and how they are used. Haseena was having difficulty interpreting the picture books because she sees reading as the process of drawing meaning from the words and a process which is irrelevant to her everyday life. In this context, if literacy is viewed as overlapping with the lives and interests of the learners, then it would not be restricted to just interpreting words or visuals in the books.

Summary of Findings for Part 1

In Part 1 of the findings, data from four of the emergent second language readers show that visuals are frequently used by the readers as the first source of information to understand the story in the picture books. The emergent second language readers in this study when reading picture books with textual and visual input would use visuals first in their effort to comprehend the story in the picture books. The data also suggest that the emergent second language readers' interpretation of the visuals is very much influenced by their social and cultural background. In this context, it can be suggested that, just like any other forms of literacy, visual literacy too is very much embedded in the social and cultural contexts of the readers.

These emergent findings discussed in this Part 1 are further analyzed and discussed in Part 2 of this chapter. The analysis and discussion are based on the profiles that have been constructed from two of the selected six participants. The profiles of these two emergent readers further explain how visuals are not only used as the main source of information, they are also used as a scaffold to gain better understanding of the meaning of words and consequently better understanding of the story in the picture books. Part 2 of the chapter also looks at the significant role that "freedom" plays in fostering a sense of independence and confidence in the emergent second language readers to take charge of their own reading. Part 2 of the chapter further discusses the influence of social and cultural contexts in the emergent second language readers' interpretation of the visuals in the picture book by looking at the types of visuals or visual culture that the emergent second language readers were exposed to and their degree of exposure to these visuals.

Part 2

Profile of Learners

In the quest to better understand emergent second language readers' visual literacy, profiles of two emergent second language readers selected from the six participants were generated. It is believed that the profiles of these two selected participants will enable the researcher to have a deeper understanding and insight into the process of young learners becoming literate in the second language, specifically the role visual literacy plays in this process.

During the study, 6 participants were selected to undergo 12 sessions each. From the 12 sessions conducted for each of the 6 participants, learner profiles were generated from two of the participants. These two participants were selected as they represent two unique ways of using visuals in their attempt to read the four types of picture books used in this study. By profiling these two learners, deeper analysis of the emerging themes from the four participants is developed and this enables a more detailed discussion of the main findings of this study.

The two selected participants that the profiles were built on are Haikal and Shirena. The two participants, one a boy and the other a girl, were both of the same age at the time of the study. They were both in their Primary 1 and they came from the same class, Year 1 Bestari. Based on their recent English language examination, Haikal was categorized by the English teacher as having middle-ability in the English language while Shirena was categorized in the low-ability group.

LEARNER 1

Haikal

Family Background

When the study was conducted, Haikal was seven years old. He had just started Primary 1 in that particular year and at the point of the study, he was only in his fourth month in Primary 1. Haikal is the youngest of 3 siblings. He has two older brothers, both of whom were in the same school as he was. His eldest brother then was ten years old (Primary 5) while the other brother was nine years old (Primary 4). Although his siblings were in the same school as Haikal, because of the big age gap between them, he was left on his own most of the time at school and after school.

Haikal's father works in a factory producing boxes nearby his house while his mother is a housewife. I was informed by one of the teachers that Haikal can be problematic in class. She claimed that Haikal has the tendency to have physical outbursts in class. The teacher felt this could be due to having a mother who was not mentally fit. The teacher claimed that Haikal's mother suffered from post-partum depression and this has affected Haikal's ability to adapt to the social surroundings of the class and the school, thus became a "troublemaker" in the class.

In my sessions with Haikal, he conveyed to me that he was always bored at home. There was no one he could talk to at home or anything that he could do. He claimed his mother was always talking and laughing to herself and at times she would get angry at him for no reason:

H: (nodded his head) Marah mama, kemudian asyik cakap seseorang [*Mother is always angry, then she would talk to herself*]

I: Oh dia selalu cakap seseorang, dia sakit ya? [*Oh, she is always talking to herself, is she unwell*?]

H: Ketawa pun sorang-sorang. Orang tak ketawa dekat dia [*She also laughs on her own. Nobody is laughing at her*]

I: Ya ke? Haikal selalu cakap dengan dia ke? [*Is that right? Do you always talk to her*?]

H: Cakap, tak, langsung pun tak pernah makan apa-apa dekat rumah [*Talk, no. I've never eaten anything at home*]

I: Haikal tak pernah makan dekat rumah? [*You've never eaten at home*?]

H: Pernah, tapi bosan je, kena kurung dalam rumah. Keluar lah, kurung kita boleh keluar, panjat grill tu lepas tu boleh keluar [*Yes, but I'm always bored, I'm always cooped up at home. But I can go out, even if I'm locked inside the home. I can climb over the door grill and get out*]

(Haikal, Session 1, WPB, IVW, 30-4-09)

Haikal preferred to spend his time away from the confines of his house and at times would wander around at the nearby abandoned pond to fish. His days were usually spent alone or with friends in his flat area without any adult supervision. Somewhere in the middle of the 12 sessions that I had with Haikal, his mother was taken in an ambulance and was warded in the psychiatric unit at a nearby general hospital. His grandmother then stayed at his house to mind him and his other brothers:

I: Pandai. Haikal suka lukis ke? [*Do you like to draw*?]

H: Kadang-kadang je, kadang-kadang tak [*Sometimes yes, sometimes no*]

I: Kadang-kadang ye, kadang-kadang tak. Masa bila yang suka tu? [*Sometimes yes, sometimes no. When will it be yes*?]

H: Masa sekolah suka, masa balik rumah tak. [*At school yes, at home no*]

I: Kalau dekat rumah suka buat apa? [*What do you like to do at home*?]

H: Dekat rumah bosan, keluar turun bawah [*I'm bored at home, I like to go down*]

I: Ya, dekat rumah tak ada siapa ke? [*Is there anyone at home*?]

H: Ada [*Yes*]

I: Sekarang ni nenek ada dekat rumah lagi? [*Is your grandmother still at home*?]

H: Ada, cuti [*Yes, she has taken leave*]

I: Nenek cuti? Nenek kerja ke? [*Your grandmother is on leave? Is she working*?]

H: Kerja tapi dia ambil cuti nak jaga kita orang, mak saya tak ada. [*She is working but she has taken leave to take care of us, my mother is not around*]

(Haikal, Session 1, WPB, IVW, 30-4-09)

School Background

Haikal's school is a fairly new school and it is located in the capital city of the country. Haikal was in Year 1 Bestari and this was the only Year 1 class in the school. The class had 27 pupils, and all of them came from the Malay ethnic group. Out of these 27 students, 7 had been categorized as not having the basic skills in reading and writing in the first language, Bahasa Melayu, while the other 20 had mixed ability in reading and writing in the first language. From these 20 mixed ability students, fewer than 10 students were considered as fluent readers in the first language while the others range from moderate readers to slow readers in the first language.

As for the second language, English, no diagnostic test was conducted by the school to determine the pupils' ability to read and write in English. The English teachers used the grades the pupils obtained in tests and semester exams to determine their level of English proficiency. Haikal was categorized as having average level or middle-level of proficiency in the language as he obtained 60% in his recent English examination conducted by the school.

English in the school was taught according to the syllabus prescribed from the national syllabus (KBSR) developed by the Curriculum Development Centre under the Ministry of Education. The teaching of English at this level (Year 1) focuses on a child's literacy development and much of this is attributed to the ability to recognize letter and sound relationships which is believed as a point leading to the ability to read words, sentences and paragraphs. This is clearly defined in the Curriculum Specification for

English (Ministry of Education, 2003) where it is stated that, "... teachers must make pupils aware of the letters and the alphabets and the sounds of these letters so that pupils can string together these sounds and produce a word" (p. 6). This method is later rationalized as bearing great importance in the development of literacy in the English Syllabus for KBSR (Ministry of Education, 2001) where it states "the teaching of reading in the early stages begins at word and phrase levels before progressing to sentence recognition and reading at the paragraph level" (p. 6).

This understanding of reading as the ability to sound out words could be seen in Haikal as he attempted to read the English words in the picture books used in the sessions. When asked if he could read or know any of the words in the picture books, he would try to 'read' the words by trying to connect the sound of each letter in the word using his understanding of letter and sound relationship in his first language. Naturally, when asked if he knew what the words he had 'read' meant, he did not know. For example, in this first session using the picture book, *Gorilla*, Haikal attempted to read aloud the word 'picture' based on his understanding of the sound and letter relationship in his first language:

I   : Ok, ni? [*Ok, this?*] (pointing to the word 'pictures')

H   : pic (peach)….cer…res

I   : pictures

H   : pictures

I   : 'pictures' tu apa? [*What are 'pictures'?*]

H   : (silence)

I : Tak tau? [*Do you know what the word means?*]

H : (shook his head)

(Haikal, PB, Session 1, IVW, 17-4-09)

In my sessions with Haikal, I would term him as an emergent reader of English as he was able to recognize some English words but he has not reached a stage where he was able to read a whole sentence and comprehend a whole sentence of English independently or with substantial amount of ease. This later became a basis for selecting Haikal as the participant of this study.

Reading Background

As mentioned earlier, due to his mother's illness and a father who has to work most of the time, Haikal spent most of his time alone. The amount of time he spent with books at home was extremely minimal and the types of book that he engaged himself with was limited to mostly comics. These comics were mostly in Bahasa Melayu and hardly any in English. Haikal spent much of his time watching television, mostly watching cartoon programs in English as well Bahasa Melayu. Haikal also said that when he went to his relative's house, he would be able to play games on the computer and he really liked this. This was evident during the session using online picture books. Haikal spent a session just exploring the researcher's laptop as he found it extremely exciting to be able to move the cursor, to change the page, to click on words and hear the words being read out loud. This was noted in the fieldnotes taken during the first session with Haikal using the online picture book:

The moment Haikal walked into the room and saw the laptop, he was excited. When I told him that he could move the cursor to hear the sentences being read out, he was even more excited. It was difficult to get his focus on the story the first look through of the online picture book because he was too engrossed in moving the cursor and clicking on the 'ear' icon to hear the sound of the sentences being read. So, I decided to just let him play around with the cursor and clicking first before I started to ask him about the story in the online picture book. (Haikal, OPB, Session 1, FN, 26-6-09)

Haikal's parents have never read English books to him at home and the English teacher in school did not have the time to have read aloud or read together sessions with the students as he needed to ensure that all the syllabus is covered before the end of the semester. Nevertheless, the teacher did have one period in a week for library period where the students were able to spend a period in the library reading books of their own selection. The school library has a fair variety of books but picture books, which are suitable for Year 1 and emergent English Language readers were still very limited in number.

Criteria for Selection

Haikal was selected as a participant in this study as he fulfilled the earlier mentioned criteria for selection. Throughout the twelve sessions conducted with Haikal using 4 types of picture books, Haikal stood out to be the one that the study was able to learn most about second language emergent readers' visual literacy in general and the role of visuals in helping second language emergent readers to become not only better readers but more confident and independent readers. By profiling Haikal, it is deemed that a better understanding of how emergent second language readers use visuals to build

on their second language literacy and how social and cultural contexts shape emergent second language readers' visual literacy can be acquired.

Sessions with Haikal

Four types of picture books were used in the sessions with Haikal. Three sessions were allocated for each type of picture book, thus a total of twelve sessions were conducted with Haikal over four types of picture books. Each session lasted for about twenty to thirty minutes. Haikal was pulled out of his class time in order to have these twelve one-to-one sessions. All sessions were audio and video recorded and permission was obtained from the school as well as Haikal's parents/guardians for this.

The four types of picture books used in this study were:

1. Printed picture book – *Gorilla* by Anthony Browne

2. Wordless picture book – *Flotsam* by David Wiesner

3. Comic – *Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd* by Bill Matheny

4. Online picture book – *The Little Red Hen* by Michael Ramirez (Starfall.com)

The sessions with Haikal are described according to the types of picture books mentioned above.

Printed picture book (Gorilla by Anthony Browne)

Session 1

In Session 1 using this book, Haikal was first asked to look through the pages in the book for five minutes and later he was asked to tell me what he thought the book might be all about. Haikal was able to tell me that the book was about a gorilla and was able to point to me the word "gorilla" on the cover of the book:

> I: Okay Haikal, buku ni pasal apa? [*Okay Haikal, what is this book all about?]*
>
> H: Gorilla
>
> I: Gorilla, pandai. Mana ada tulis gorilla dekat sini (the cover)? [*Gorilla, clever. Is the word 'gorilla' written here (on the cover)?]*
>
> H: (pointed to the word gorilla on the cover of the book)
>
> I: Ha pandai. Mana gorilla dekat gambar ni? [*Ha, clever. Where is the picture of gorilla here?]*
>
> H: (pointed to the picture of gorilla on the cover of the book)
>
> (Haikal, Session 1, PB, IVW, 17-4-09)

When asked about the story in the book, he was able to generate a general idea of the story from the illustrations in the book. At this point he was already able to see that the illustrations in the book were connected to one another to form a story. At this stage, his interpretation of the story was solely derived from the illustrations in the book. This was noted in the fieldnotes during the first session using *Gorilla*:

Haikal was quite enthusiastic in this session whereby he was eager to tell me what the story was based on his interpretation of the illustrations in the book. I didn't have to do a lot of prompting with Haikal as he was ever willing to express his interpretation of the illustrations.
(Haikal, Session 1, PB, FN, 17-4-09)

At this stage also, he did not pay any attention to the words in the books but when asked

he was able to recognize some of the words in the books like "book" and "read":

I: Dia tak ada kawan, okay. Sekarang ni dekat sini ada tak perkataan yang

        Haikal tau? [*He has no friends, okay. Now here, are there any words that*

        Haikal knows?]

H: (silence)

I: Ada? Ni tau [*Yes? Do you know this one?*] (pointing to the word 'gorilla')

H: Gors...go..rilla

I: Aha, gorilla, lagi? [*Aha, gorilla, anymore?*]

H: Sit

I: Sit, mana sit? [*Sit, where is 'sit'?*]

H: (pointed to the word 'she')

I: Oh okay, she. She ni apa? [*Oh okay, 'she'. What does 'she' mean?*]

H: She ni tengok [*'she' means 'see'*]

I: Oh, 'tengok', okay, lagi? [*Oh, 'see', okay, anymore?*]

H: Read

I: Okay, maknanya? [*Okay, what does it mean?*]

H: Baca [*Read*]

I: Pandai. Yang ini tau tak? [*Brilliant. Do you know this one ?*] (pointing to the word 'book')

H: Book

(Haikal, Session 1, PB, IVW, 17-4-09)

I later went through the book page by page with Haikal to see what he had understood of the events taking place in each page. Haikal was able to understand in general what the illustrations in each page were trying to convey. Although he was not able to comprehend some of the words which reflect the feelings and emotions of the characters in the story, he was able to deduce the characters' emotions through the illustrations as well as his background knowledge on the particular scene the illustrations were trying to convey. For instance, when he was asked about the breakfast scene in the second page of the book (picture below), he was able to interpret that Hannah, the main character in the story, was not happy:
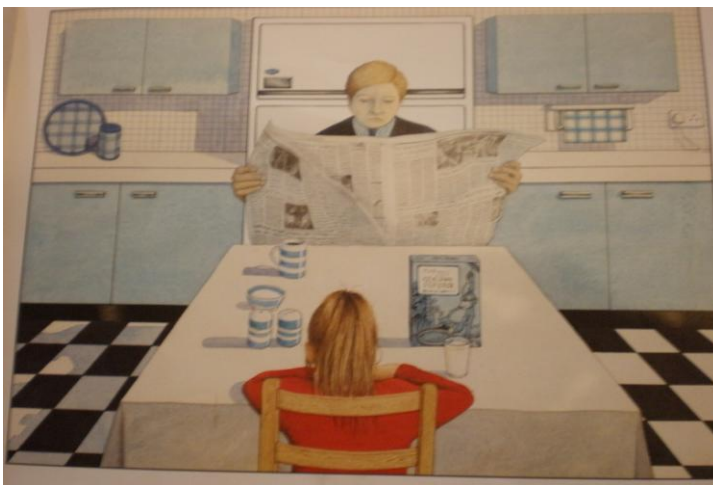
Gorilla by Anthony Browne (page 2)

I: Okay, siapa dekat dapur? [*Okay, who are in the kitchen?*]

H: Ayah dia dengan anak dia [*The father and the daughter*]

I: Ayah dengan anak dia. Dia orang tengah buat apa? [*The father and daughter. What are they doing?*]

H: Sorang rasa sedih, sorang baca surat khabar [*One is sad, one is reading the newspaper*]

I: Siapa baca surat khabar? [*Who is reading the newspaper?*]

H: Ayah dia [*The father*]

I: Ayah. Siapa yang sedih? [*Father. Who is sad?*]

H: (pointed to the picture of Hannah)

I: Apasal sedih? [*Why is she sad?*]

H: Tak ada kawan [*No friends*]

(Haikal, Session 1, PB, IVW, 17-4-09)

Although illustrations enabled Haikal to have a basic comprehension of the story and the emotions of the characters, he was still uncertain about the relationships among the characters in the book as the illustrations of the same characters can slightly differ from one page to another depending on the movement of the characters and the clothes they were wearing. In addition, as Haikal in this session did not pay much attention to the words in the book and the name of characters could only be derived from words, it was even more challenging for him to have a clear understanding of the relationship between one character and another. For instance, he was inconsistent in his reference to the "father" character. In the second page, he referred the illustration of the father as the

father but later, he referred to the "father" character as "brother" and the character of "daughter" as "sister" in page five of the book :

Gorilla by Anthony Browne (page 5)

I: Okay, dekat sini? [*Okay, here?*]

H: Ni abang dia, ni adik dia [*This is the brother, this is the sister*] (pointing to the two characters)

I: Oh ini abang dia. Abang dia tengah buat apa? [*Oh, this is the brother. What is the brother doing?*]

H: Belajar [*Studying*]

I: Okay, yang ini (flipping back to the illustration on page 2) dengan ni sama ke? [*Okay, this one (flipping back to the illustration on page 2) and this one are the same person?*]

H: Tak [*No*]

I: Tak sama. Yang ini orang lain, yang ini abang dia? Ya? [*Not the same. This is a another person, this is her brother?*]

H: (silence)

I: Rasa-rasanyalah, sama tak? [*Do you think they are of the same person?*]

H: Tak [*No*] (Haikal, Session 1, PB, IVW, 17-4-09)

Session 2

In Session 2 of this picture book, Haikal now focused more on the words as compared to Session 1 where he hardly paid any attention to the words in the picture book. He tried to sound out the words using his understanding of letter and sound relationship in his first language, Bahasa Melayu. Nevertheless, this did not help him much in understanding the meaning of the words though some of the words which I helped him to sound out, he was able to know what they mean, like 'love' and 'time'. Thus, in each page I tried to highlight the key words which would enable Haikal to have a better understanding of the illustrations and eventually the story in the picture book. For instance, in page 4 of *Gorilla* (picture following) where there was a picture of the girl and the father together, I highlighted the word "father" and "busy" to give a better context of the illustrations in that page. By knowing the word 'father' Haikal then knew the two characters in that page were a father and a daughter and that the illustration of the father always at his work desk was trying to convey that the father was always "busy".

Gorilla by Anthony Browne (page 4)

I: Oh okay. Bila Hannah tanya dia soalan dia kata "not now I'm busy." Busy tu apa? [*Oh okay. When Hannah asked him a question, he would say 'Not now, I'm busy'. What is the meaning of 'busy'?*]

H: Busy tu… tak tau [*Busy is...don't know*]

I: Okay, pernah tak dengar orang cakap, pernah tak dengar ayah ke mak cakap, I'm busy?[*Okay, have you ever heard anybody said, or your father of mother said, 'I'm busy'?*]

H: (shook his head)

I: Kalau macam ni apa maknanya (pointing to the illustration in page 4)? Kalau kita takde masa nak bawa dia, sebab kita selalu kerja, busy. [*What does it mean to be like this (pointing to the illustrations in page 4)? If we don't have time to take her because we are always working, busy*]

H: Sibuklah, lambat kalau pergi zoo karang, boss marah.[*Busy, if he goes to the zoo, he'll be late for work and his boss will be angry at him*]

I: Boss marah (chuckle). But the next day he was always too busy. Sibuk, nampak. Siapa yang sibuk tu? [*The boss will be angry (chuckle). But the next day he was always too busy. Can you see it, he's busy. Who is busy?*]

H: Abang dia [*Her brother*]

I: Abang dia ke ayah dia? [*Her brother or father?*]

H: Abang [*Brother*]

I: Okay kita tengok dekat sini (flipping to the page before). Sini dia kata 'father'. 'Father' tu maknanya apa?

[*Okay, let us see here (flipping to the previous page). Here it says 'father'. What does 'father' mean?*]

H: Ayah [*Father*]

I: Ha..so ini ayah dia lah. [*Ha, so this is her father*]

(Haikal, Session 2, PB, IVW, 23-4-09)

At this stage, Haikal was already familiar with the illustrations and with better understanding of some of the words that came together with the illustrations, he was able to have a better understanding of the story. In this context also Haikal, with prompting, was activating the bootstrapping process, in which his inability to cognitively process most of the verbal and written input was being compensated by his better ability to process the visual input (Paivio, 1979). For example when he was trying to comprehend the word "sad", he at first said it meant "duduk" (sat) but when asked to look at the illustrations in that page, he then said the word meant "sedih" (sad):

I: She thought they were beautiful but sad. Sad tu apa? [*She thought they were beautiful but sad. What is the meaning of the word 'sad'?*]

H: Sad tu duduk [*'Sad' is 'sat'*]

I: Okay, itu satu 'sat', lagi satu 'sad' dengan 'd'. Kalau duduk 'sat', kalau 'sad' tu macam mana? Tengok muka dia macam mana? [*Okay, but that is 'sat', another one is 'sad', with 'd'. What is sad? Look at the face, how's the face?*]

H: Sedih [*Sad*] (Haikal, Session 2, PB, IVW, 23-4-09)

Session 3

Session 3 was the last session for each genre of picture book. Haikal was required to demonstrate his understanding of the story through visual or written output. Visual here refers to drawing, sketches or mind map, while written refers to words, phrases or sentences which he felt reflected the story in the picture book. Haikal drew the picture below:
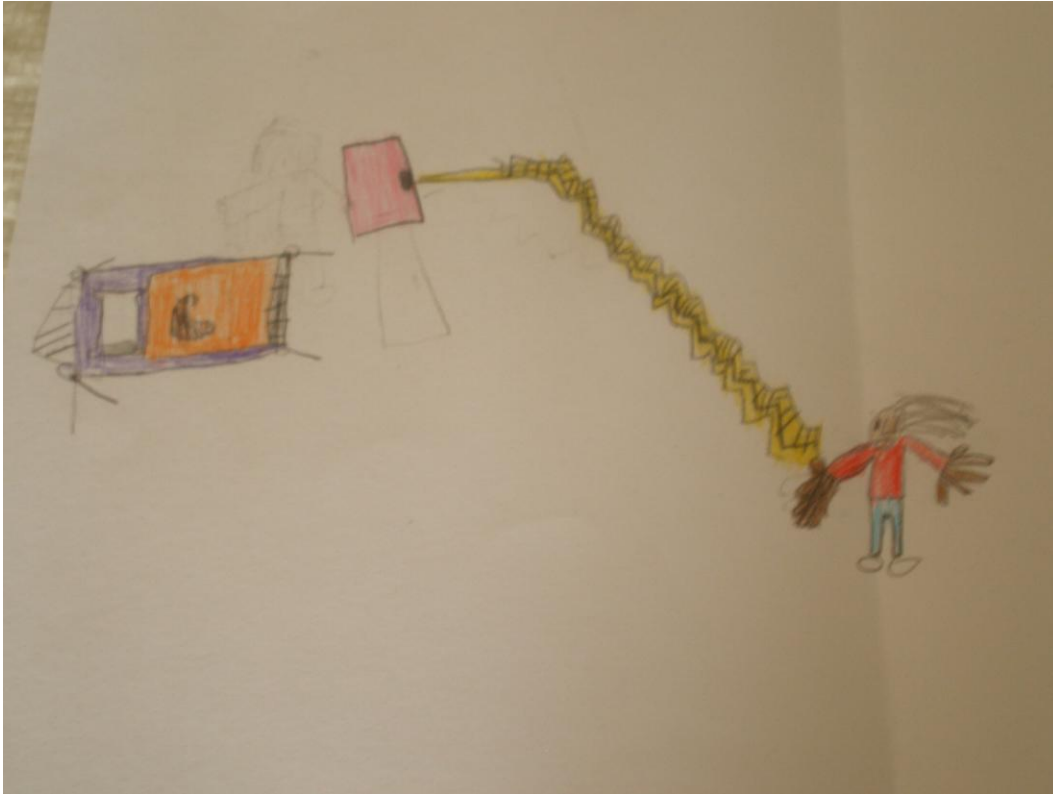
(Haikal, Session 3, PB, DA, 24-4-09)

Haikal drew pictures of a girl about to walk up the stairs to her room. The room is portrayed through a picture of a door and a bed with the toy gorilla on the bed. This drawing reflected Haikal's understanding that the actual story of the *Gorilla* started with the scene of Hannah and the Gorilla meeting for the first time as this signified the beginning of Hannah's adventure with the gorilla. Although the title of the book is *Gorilla* and the gorilla is the main character in the story, Haikal in his drawing chose not to draw a gorilla but instead drew the toy gorilla. Later in the third session, Haikal said that a real gorilla is wild and fierce and when asked if the gorilla in this story was real, he said the only thing real in the story was the toy gorilla, the real gorilla in the story only came about due to magic and thus could not be considered as real:

H: Dia tak suka manusia [*It doesn't like humans*]

I: Oh, dia tak suka manusia. Hmm...mana Haikal tau dia tak suka manusia?

[*Oh, it doesn't like humans. Hmm..how does Haikal know that it doesn't like humans?*]

H: Haikal pernah pergi ke zoo, gorilla kan liar. Dia tak suka manusia.[*Haikal has been to the zoo, isn't gorilla wild? It doesn't like humans*]

I: Hmmm...maknanya cerita ni tak betul lah gorilla suka manusia [*Hmmm..so that means in this story where the gorilla likes the girl, it is not real?*]

H: Tak, yang itu gorilla apa [*No, in the story is a different gorilla*]

I: Yang dalam cerita ni gorilla apa?[*What kind of gorilla is in this story?*]

H: Gorilla mainan [*Toy gorilla*]

I: Yang bila dia jadi besar tu? [*When the toy gorilla becomes the big gorilla?*]

H: Dia tak pukul orang [*That gorilla does not beat people up*]

I: Oh dia tak pukul orang. Ada gorilla pukul orang, ada gorilla tak pukul orang? [*Oh, it doesn't beat people up. Some gorillas do and some don't ?*]

H: Cuma mainan aje yang tak wujud. [*It is just a toy, it doesn't exist*]

I: Mainan tak wujud [*Toys do not exist?*]

H: Ni bila besar, cuma magic je yang boleh buat [*When the toy turns into a big one, only magic can do that*]

I: Oh cerita tu macam ada magic lah, daripada mainan terus jadi gorilla.

So gorilla tu gorilla magic jadi dia tak pukul orang?[*Oh so this story has a magic, the gorilla can turn from a toy into a real one. So this magic gorilla does not beat people up?*]

H: Hmm..

(Haikal, Session 3, PB, IVW, 24-4-09)

Wordless picture book (Flotsam by David Wiesner)

Session 1

The same procedures with the earlier type of picture book were employed for the wordless picture book. Haikal was first asked to look through the pages of the wordless picture book on his own and later Haikal and I looked at the pages of the book one by one.

The book begins with a picture of a boy at the beach exploring things with his viewing tools (binoculars, magnifying glass, and microscope). Haikal related the scene at the beach with his own experience going to the beach with his family:

I: Okay, kita tengok page ni. Ni dekat mana [*Okay, let us look at this page. Where is this*?]

H: Dekat pantai [*At the beach*]

I: Dekat pantai. Haikal pernah pergi pantai tak? [*At the beach. Have you been to the beach Haikal?*]

H: Dekat laut [*At the sea*]

I: Dekat laut. Dekat mana? [*At the sea. Where?*]

H: Dekat Mersing [*At Mersing*]

I: Mersing, jauhnya. Siapa duduk dekat Mersing? [*Mersing, that is far. Who stays there?*]

H: Dekat situ ada laut [*There is sea there*]

I: Oh ya, Haikal pergi dengan siapa? [*Oh yes, with whom did you go with*?]

H: Dengan saudara [*With relatives*]

(Haikal, Session 1, WPB, IVW, 30-4-09)

When asked about the tools that the boy used to explore things at the beach, he was able to name these tools in Bahasa Melayu and he knew the use of these tools:

I: Ketam, okay. Yang ini? [*Crab, okay. What about this?*]

H: Kanta pembesar [*Magnifying glass*]

I: Kanta pembesar, pandai. [*Magnifying glass, clever*]

H: Kanta pembesar, kalau yang kecil, masuk dalam ni, boleh nampak besar [*With magnifying glass, if you put small thing under it, you will be able to see it big*]

I: Pandai. Yang ini? [*Smart. This one*?]

H: Teropong [*Binoculars*]

I: Teropong buat apa? [*What do you use binoculars for*?]

H: Nak tengok benda jauh [*To see things which are far away*]

(Haikal, Session 1, WPB, IVW, 30-4-09)

I gave more freedom for Haikal to describe to me the illustrations in the book as well as to interpret the story of *Flotsam* by allowing him to do much of the talking. He

seemed to be able to describe each of the illustrations in the book and provided details in the illustrations which other participants were unable to do. For instance, he was able to name specific type of fish (*ikan buntal)*, bird (*burung wak-wak*, penguin), and location (North Pole). When asked how he knew most of these things, his answers were mostly that he had seen them before on television or in computer games:

> H: Ikan..ikan ni dia naik belon udara, ikan buntal [*Fish..this fish went on a hot air balloon ride but the balloon is a blowfish*]
>
> I: Betul, pandai. Pernah tengok ikan buntal? [*You're right, clever. Have you seen a blowfish before?*]
>
> H: Tak pernah, dalam game [*Never, only in games*]
>
> I: Dalam game. Ikan buntal tu kecil, tapi bila orang kacau, dia jadi apa? [*In games. The blowfish is actually small but what happened when it feels threatened*?]
>
> H: Besar [*Big*]

(Haikal, Session 1, WPB, IVW, 30-4-09)

At this stage, Haikal is portrayed as someone who is very visual; though his exposure to books is limited as compared to the other participants, he was able to remember and relate his previous visual encounters to the visuals in the book.

Session 2

Due to the visual density of the book, in Session 1, Haikal focused more on comprehending each of the illustrations in the book without paying much attention to how the illustrations were connected to one another to form a story. In this session,

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Haikal was more continuous in his description of the illustrations. He no longer saw the illustrations as isolated pieces from page to page. Rather, he was now able to see the main story the illustrations were trying to convey. Thus, when asked about the story in the book, he was able to say that it was about a boy who found a camera and from that camera he was able to see a lot of pictures. This development in Haikal's interpretations of the illustrations was noted in the fieldnotes:

> In this session, he was able to tell the story using the illustrations. I could see the development of his story and continuity of his story in this session. The part in the story where the boy looked at the picture of a person holding another picture and another picture, he was able to understand this in this session though in the first session he was not able to do so. He was more critical/detail in his analysis of the illustrations.
> (Haikal, Session 2, WPB, FN, 7-5-09)

Before I ended the session, I gave Haikal a notebook and told him that he could draw the story of *Flotsam* in the book whenever he had free time at home. I asked him to bring the notebook the next time I see him for the last session on the wordless picture book.

Session 3

Similar to the earlier Session 3 of printed picture book, in this session, Haikal was asked to either draw or write what he understood of the story in the book *Flotsam*. When he came for the session, he showed me what he had drawn in the notebook that I gave him in Session 2. In this notebook, he drew three fish, jellyfish, camera and a boat:

(Haikal, Session 3, WPB, DA (1), 7-5-09)

When I asked him to draw on a bigger piece of paper (a drawing block) in this session, he drew almost the same thing that he drew in the notebook.

(Haikal, Session 3, WPB, DA(2), 7-5-09)

For this book, Haikal also drew the main elements in the story ─ the camera, the fish and the sea. Although he did not draw the boy who was also the main character in the story, he told me that the boy is on further left of the paper and that he could not draw him as there was no space to draw on the paper as the sea was very big and had taken much space in the paper. At this point, it can be seen that one's output is not a true reflection of one's knowledge and this is very much in Haikal's case. He has been labeled as 'troublemaker' by one of his teachers as he came from a troubled home. At one instance, his class teacher did not allow him to participate in a performance that the class was trying to put together for teachers' day for fear he will "ruin" the performance. But Haikal as an individual is a very knowledgeable boy and very observant of his surroundings. In a situation where he was allowed to participate and contribute without prejudice, his ability to be a good learner could be seen.

Comic (Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd by Bill Matheny)

Session 1

Comic is a genre that Haikal was familiar with as he said he had read comics before and he enjoyed reading comics because it is a much easier reading and much more fun as the story is usually funny. In this session, he was excited to see the comic and he did not require any prompting as to where he should start and the progression of the many illustrations in each page. Haikal was able to know that the illustrations are all connected to form a story and he was able to generate the story from the illustrations

Haikal was not able to read most of the words in the comic but when asked to look through the comic, he would make his own sound effects of the actions that the illustrations were trying to convey. He was also able to recognize words that were used to describe the sound effect of the action in that particular illustration. He occasionally would chuckle to himself looking at the illustrations in the comic:

I: Okay, apa jadi dekat sini? [*Okay, what's happening here*?]

H: Ini dia tengah menembak. Ini dekat kedai. Dia pijak, lepas tu orang tangkap dia, dia sebat, dia dapat tali pinggang ni, dia zoom. Zooooom.. [*Here he is shooting. This is at a shop. He stepped in and later some people caught him and lashed him, he got hold of this belt, and zoom. Zoooom….*]

I: Dia ikat orang tu? [*He tied the person up*?]

H: Dia ikatnya. [*He tied him up*]

I: Lepas tu? [*After that*?]

H: Yang ini dia nak buang satu, suiiiii, yank (sound effect), terbang.[*This one, he was about to throw something, suiiiii, yank* (sound effect), *fly*]

(Haikal, Session 1, Comic, IVW, line 1-6, 14-5-09)

H: Ni bugs bunny. Ini baru time dia besar. Ni dia sidai baju, dia macam ni, jatuh baju dia entah ke mana entah. Dia tengok dalam ni, ada tanda, ada tanda kata dia pergi, dia kata 'waaaa'. Dan ini dia kata buat macam ni, macam ni, macam macam ni dan dia suruh telefon. Dia bawa telefon makan lobak, dia buat macam tu, dia fikir, waaaaa, monster keluar dan dia pun kena lempang, pergi balik lah dan dia pun rasa 'ehhhh'. Ni dia kata 'preeng, preng', yang ini 'kreng, kreng'. Ni dia jumpa makanan. Ni, ni, ni.. [*This is bugs bunny. He has grown up. Here he is drying his washing. His clothes then went missing. He looked inside here, there was a sign, there was a sign that asked him to go away, he said 'waaaa'. And here he said do it like this, like this, and many other ways, and he was asked to make a call. He brought the telephone, ate his carrot, he did this way, then he was thinking, waaaaaa, a monster came out and slapped him. The monster asked him to go home and he said 'ehhhhh'. Here he said 'preeng, preng', here 'kreng, kreng'. Here he found food. Here, here, here…*]

(Haikal, Session 1, Comic, IVW, line 46, 14-5-09)

Session 2

In this session Haikal attempted to read the words in the comic book by trying to sound out the words using his knowledge of letter-sound relationship in Bahasa Melayu. He did this in an effort to have a better understanding of the illustrations and the story in the comic. Haikal was observed to be putting in more effort to read the words in the comic as compared to the words in the picture book in the earlier sessions with him. This may be due to the genre of comic where the text is usually in a form of dialogue. Thus Haikal felt there was a need to know what the characters were talking about instead of just looking at what they were doing. But he was struggling in his effort to sound out the words and found it even more difficult to understand the meaning of those words that he was trying to sound out. A lot of prompting had to be done so that Haikal was able to sound out the words correctly and was able to know the meaning of those words:

I: Pokok tupai tu. Ni apa dia cakap ni? Ni benih ni apa? [*What is it saying here? What seeds are these*?]

H: Ex..ti..ra

I: Extra

H: Extra...spe..chi..

I: Spicy

H: Spicy

I: Spicy tu maknanya pedas [*'Spicy' means spicy*]

H: Ma..geek

I: Magic

H: Magic

I: Tau tak apa magic? [*Do you know what magic means*?]

H: Bi..bi..

I: Beans

H: Beans

I: Beans tu benih ni lah. So this is supposed to be beans yang magic.

Magic tu apa? ['*Beans' means beans. So, this is supposed to be magic*

beans. Do you know what magic is?]

H: Tau [I know]

I: Macam silap mata macam tu kan [*It's like the magician doing his magic*]

H: Dia..kalau..kita..nanti..abadacabra..nanti ting dia hilang [*If it goes*

'abadacabra', and 'ting' he disappears]

I: So dia macam magic sebab tu dia boleh jadi besar sampai tumbuh ke awan

[*So, the beans are like magic and the beanstalk can grow up until it*

reaches the clouds]

H: Ke langit [*To the sky*]

I: Ke langit okay. [*To the sky, okay*.]

(Haikal, Session 2, Comic, IVW, 19-5-09)

With the knowledge of the words, Haikal was able to give the illustrated characters voice as well as personality and this has made Haikal reach a better understanding of the story in the comic book

Session 3

Unlike in the other sessions where Haikal did not have any problems producing a drawing or a writing to show his understanding of the story, for this particular genre he took a long time to produce an output that would reflect his understanding of the story in the comic book. He then asked me if he could just copy the illustrations in the comic book and I allowed him to do so. Even by doing that, he took some time to complete his drawing and many times erased the things he had drawn earlier.

After about 15 minutes engaging in his drawing, he said that he was done and his drawing to a certain extent, reflects the way he read the comic book. Haikal, as in his other drawings, drew the main characters in the story, the giant and the gophers. But in this drawing he also drew the wheelbarrow going down the hill and at the top of this drawing he wrote 'SPLATT', which is the sound effect of the giant falling off the wheelbarrow with a load of tomatoes. He also drew a picture of the giant falling down from the clouds and hitting the ground and with this drawing he wrote 'THUNK' on top of the drawing:
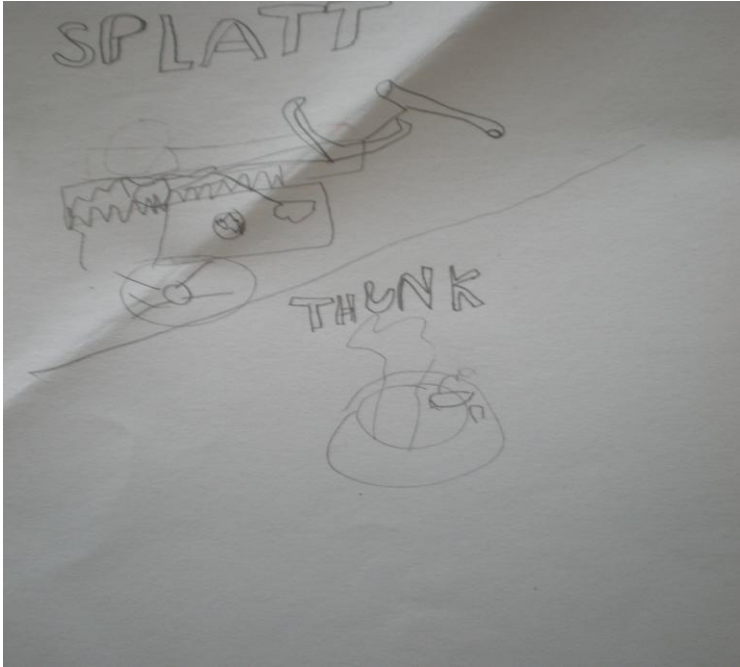
(Haikal, Session 3, Comic, DA, 18-6-09)

In this context, his drawing reflects his way of reading the comic book, focusing not so much on the words but the sound effects that the actions in the illustrations were trying to convey. This could also be related to his fascination for watching cartoon like Looney Toons which consists of the characters in the cartoon engaging in a lot of actions with a lot of sound effects.

Online Picture book (The Little Red Hen by Starfall)

Session 1

In this first session, Haikal's enthusiasm was very much contributed by the presence of a laptop in the session. When allowed to maneuver the flipping of the pages of the online picture book by himself, he was excited to do so, so much so that his focus at this point was more on the computer than the story in the online picture book. I

allowed him to "play" with the computer first in this session before asking him to focus on the story in the online picture book.

The feature of this online picture book was such that a reader is able to click on the sentence or on each word to hear the sentence or the word being read out. Haikal found this feature the most interesting and for the first time as compared to my earlier sessions with him using other types of picture book, his focus was more on the words and not so much on the visuals in the book. Haikal found the ability to click on the sentences or words by himself liberating and he did not have to struggle so much to sound out the words like what he had done in the other sessions with other types of picture books. In addition, this feature also gave him a sense of independence – the ability to not rely on me all the time in order to know how to "read" the words:

H: Little Red Hen ....mmm..cuba dengar dulu dari muka surat...Haikal

          rasa nak baca muka surat 2, ha okay, ni dia ayam dia. Yang ini ayam

          merah. Yang ini ayam biasa. Ni ayam belanda. [*Little Red Hen….mmm let*

          us listen to page…I think I want to read page 2, ha okay, this is the

          chicken. This is red chicken. This is normal chicken. This is turkey.]

I: Mmm..tu apa? [*Mmm..what is that*?]

H: Ni, ayam merah, yang ini itik [*This is a red chicken, this is a duck*]

I: Angsa, goose [*'Angsa' is goose*]

H: Goose. Biar kita dengar dulu, baru tau. Ada tak permainan macam game?

          [*Goose. Let us listen to it first, then we'll know. Is there a game?*]

I: Game tak ada. Buku je [*There's no game. Only a book*]

H: Haikal rasa Haikal nak dengar (click on the sentence 'she asked a turkey')

turkey. [*I think I want to listen to (click on the sentence 'she asked a*

turkey')]

(Haikal, Session 1, OPB, IVW, 26-6-09)

At the end of the session, Haikal had a better grasp in his computer handling and a sense of excitement about this new type of picture book. So much so that when he finished clicking all the sentences in the book, he wanted to know if there were other books in my laptop that he could read. I showed him the list of other books and without any instructions from me, he was able to click on those other books but it was observed that he liked online picture books which allowed him to hear the words being read out by clicking on the sentences or words. If the book did not have this feature, he would change to a different book that has this feature.

Session 2

In this second session using online picture book, Haikal was able to focus more on the story in the book rather than the mechanical aspects of the book. Visuals were still his main source of information in deriving the story of the book but visuals in this book were also used by Haikal as a source of information to know the meaning of the words which he now was able to sound out due to the read aloud feature of the book. For instance, in order to understand the meaning of the word "turkey" and "goose", he searched for the picture of those two animals in order to know what those words meant.

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At the end of this session, he was able to have a better understanding of the story in the online picture book without much prompting from me. Most importantly, the feature of the book that allowed Haikal to click on sentences or words to hear them being read out loud has given him the opportunity to hear the words being read repetitively without having to rely on me or other people. The book gave him another source of information that other types of picture books could not; it allowed Haikal to have the aural input in addition to the visual and textual input and this has given significant effect on not only Haikal's understanding of the story in the book but also in giving him a sense of confidence in reading the book independently.

Session 3

In this session where Haikal was asked to produce a drawing or writing based on his understanding of the story, Haikal in the beginning drew four animals – hen, duck, turkey and goose. I then asked him for the names of those animals, he was able to tell me the names in Bahasa Melayu. I then asked for the English terms of those animals, he was able tell the English terms for the mentioned animals orally. I asked Haikal if he could add the names of those animals in his drawing. Haikal quickly started to search for the pages in the online picture book that had the pictures of those animals. He then clicked on the sentences with the pictures of those animals and waited until the names of the animals were read out. As the words were highlighted as they were read out, Haikal was able to know which of the words were the names of the animals that he had drawn. He then copied the words – hen, duck, turkey and goose – under his drawing of the animals:

(Haikal, Session 3, OPB, DA, 9-7-09)

At this stage, Haikal's understanding of the meaning of the words was reinforced through writing. He first heard the words being read out, he then was able to derive the meaning of the words through the visuals provided with the words and now, he was able to write the words.

Haikal's Evolvement as a Reader

Haikal started as a student who was deemed to be with not much potential in succeeding in school due to his 'problematic' nature. But given the space to explore his strengths, he was able to build on his reading. In the case of Haikal, his strength was his vast exposure to the visuals around him and the ability to remember these visuals much better than words.

In the sessions with him, Haikal was made to see that the clues in understanding a text or story are not just in the words, they could also come from the visuals in the book. Haikal's visual literacy which was developing at a higher rate than his traditional literacy was used as a scaffolding device to help build his reading and writing. By helping Haikal to use the visuals in the book to better understand the words in the book and eventually the story in the book, he was made to see there is another source of information in reading apart form words and this source of information is something that he was more familiar with and found it easier to interpret. This is reflected in Paivio's (1979) Dual Coding Theory where the Dual Coding Principles have been used in remedial education for learning and reading difficulties. Traditionally, remediation on reading difficulties has focused on decoding words because it was believed that readers must recognize printed words before they can get meaning. However, decoding and comprehension is not highly correlated. Thus, based on dual coding principles, comprehension is taught through a program of visualizing and verbalizing.

In the sessions using the online picture book, the aural input made it even easier for Haikal to comprehend the story as it provided another source of information in the text that Haikal could use to not only deduce the meaning of words but also the story in the book. This highlights the importance of providing reading aloud sessions in early reading programs rather than putting too much focus on letter and sound recognition in the early stage of learning to read. This is because young children's aural comprehension ability outstrips their word recognition competence (Beck & McKeown, 2001). The various studies on reading aloud (Chomsky, 1972; Cochran-Smith, 1984) have

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documented many benefits of reading aloud to younger children in areas of language growth and reading achievement. Research has also indicated that motivation, interest, and engagement are often enhanced when teachers read aloud to school students (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001).

In the context of the online picture book, the aural input was able to provide another source of information apart from visual and textual input, and Haikal was able to orchestrate all the inputs in his effort to make sense of the words and the story in the book. This reflects Clay's (1991) definition of reading acquisition in which she believes reading acquisition involves learning to use all the sources of information in texts to problem-solve the meanings. In addition, as indicated in the above mentioned research on reading aloud, this online picture book provided an alternative to teacher reading aloud to the students. The online picture book allows the book to be read aloud to a student individually and as observed with Haikal, it too could enhance motivation, interest and engagement.

Haikal as a Teacher

Haikal has allowed me to view reading through his world. His world of reading is watching the television, playing with his friends after school, going fishing at a nearby pond alone and jumping into a swimming pool at a nearby apartment with his friends. In Haikal's world of reading, reading is not about having a lot of books to read at home and it is not about having his mother or father read to him every night. His reading is his everyday encounter with sights and sounds and this is the world that he functions in and

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in his school, he was expected to function in a different world. Failure to do so leads to a sense of insecurity and low self-esteem which lead to more frustration and dissatisfaction with himself , the teacher, the class, and the school.

Renwick (1984) believes that for children to move confidently into literacy, they must feel happy and comfortable in their classroom and school; fearful children will be inarticulate, unable to listen, awed by the teacher, and withdraw into their old competencies rather than reaching out for new ones. In the sessions with Haikal, space was given for Haikal to have his own interpretations of the visuals, words, and story first, and space was also given for him to see his strength in reading (in his case, the visuals) and to develop this strength to further develop his reading. Above all, Haikal did his own learning and I was there only as a facilitator, helping him with his own attempts to teach himself. What Cashdan (1976) stated, more than three decades ago, is still relevant today in Haikal's case where Cashdan believed that a child is self-stimulating and self-starting provided conditions are right for him. The importance of providing the right conditions for learning is also emphasized by Bruner (1975) who noted that a child is able to learn anything at any age if the right conditions are provided. Clay (1991) also asserted that if a child fails in a reading program, too often it is true when the child has to learn by the teacher's program and she believes that instruction should start where the child is and not where the teacher is. Addressing the learners as individuals and understanding their view of reading may differ from one another is an important aspect in leading a child to the path of literacy. This understanding will also lead to the acceptance that there may be more than one path for a child in becoming literate. Educationists and policy makers have

always stressed the need to acknowledge students' individual needs and student-centered method of teaching and Haikal's path to literacy in this study clearly illustrates what it means to foster student-centeredness in teaching.

Thus in the context of Haikal, at the end of the twelve sessions, Haikal was able to become his own teacher, he was able to recognize his own strength and use this in his reading. What is more important is Haikal has taught me that a child's potential should not be limited by our own preconceptions and prejudice.

LEARNER 2

Shirena

Family Background

Shirena was seven years old when the study was conducted and she had just started Primary 1 in a national type primary school. Shirena is the second of 5 siblings. Her eldest sister then was in Primary 4 in the same school and she has two younger sisters and a younger brother.

Shirena's father works as a van driver with a private television company while her mother is a homemaker. At home her mother was always busy looking after the family and the father usually just watched television when he came back from work.

School Background

Shirena went to the same school as Haikal. This school was a fairly new school located in the capital city of the country. Shirena was also in class 1 Bestari and Shirena was one of the 7 students in the class who have been categorized as not having the ability to read and write in the first language, thus having the need to go through the Intensive Reading and Writing Programme (KIA2M) developed by the Ministry of Education. In other schools with a greater number of Primary 1 students, the KIA2M students are usually placed in one class. However, in this school as the number of KIA2M students was only 7 and the number was considered as too small to form another class, the 7 students were placed in the same class as the others. The Bahasa Melayu teacher found this challenging as she needed to divide her time and focus between two different groups

in the class. In addition, she needed to prepare two sets of materials or two sets of activities for the two different groups in the class.

As for English (the second language), no diagnostic test was conducted to determine the students' ability to read and write in English. The English teacher used the grades the students obtained in school based tests and semester examinations to determine their level of English proficiency. Shirena was categorized as having low-level of proficiency in the language as she obtained 52% in her recent English examination which was developed and conducted by the school.

Reading background

Shirena said her parents did buy her books but she did not have that many books at home. The ones that she had at home were mostly Bahasa Melayu books. Shirena's parents have never read English or Bahasa Melayu books to her at home. She usually just looked at the pictures in the book by herself. At home, Shirena usually spent her time watching television and hardly read any books.

Shirena went to a year of pre-school prior to her entering Primary 1. She was not able to recall the name of the books she had read or the books she had been read to during her pre-school year, but during the sessions with her she would relate the visuals in the picture books with something that she encountered or experienced during her pre-school year. For instance in the sessions with Shirena using the book *Gorilla*, she related the

experience of seeing a gorilla in a zoo during a school trip in her pre-school year with the picture of gorilla in the book.

Criteria for Selection

Shirena was selected as a participant in this study as she fulfilled the earlier mentioned criteria. Although Shirena was categorized as a weak learner by the school standardized literacy test, throughout the twelve sessions conducted with Shirena using 4 types of picture books, she stood out to be the one that the study was able to learn most about emergent second language readers' visual literacy in general and the role of visuals in helping emergent second language readers to become not only better readers but a more confident and independent readers. By profiling Shirena, it is believed that a better understanding of how emergent second language readers use visuals to build on their second language literacy and how social and cultural contexts shape emergent second language readers' visual literacy can be gained. In the case of Shirena, one can also gain a better understanding of how a student can be doing well in one literacy program but be labeled as weak learner in another literacy program.

Sessions with Shirena

Four types of picture books were used in the sessions with Shirena. Three sessions were allocated for each type of picture book, thus a total of twelve sessions were conducted with her using four types of picture books. Each session lasted about twenty to thirty minutes. Shirena was pulled out from her class time in order to have these twelve

one-to-one sessions. All sessions were audio and video recorded and permission was obtained from the school as well as Shirena's parents for this.

The four types of picture books used in this study were:

1. Printed picture book – *Gorilla* by Anthony Browne

2. Wordless picture book – *Flotsam* by David Wiesner

3. Comic – *Fi, Fo, Fee, Fudd* by Bill Matheny

4. Online picture book – *The Little Red Hen* by Starfall.com

The sessions with Shirena are described according to the types of picture books mentioned above.

Printed picture book (Gorilla by Anthony Browne)

Session 1

In the first session using this type of picture book, Shirena was first asked to look through the book by herself for about five to ten minutes. The session then started by asking Shirena what she understood by the cover of the picture book (picture below). Shirena was able to describe the picture of a girl and cat on the cover but was having some difficulties in explaining the picture of a gorilla on the cover. However, after much prompting, she said it was a picture of a monkey. When she was asked the title of the book, she pointed to the title of the book on the cover but when she was asked if she knew what the title was, she said no. When the title was read to her, she then said the illustrations which she earlier said was a monkey was now a gorilla. She also claimed that she knew what a gorilla is and that the book was about a gorilla.

Gorilla by Anthony Browne (cover)

I: Gambar apa? Ni kucing, ni orang, yang ini? Shirena pernah nampak tak binatang ni? Pernah? Dekat mana? Dekat zoo ke? Pernah nampak ni? [*What picture is this? This is a cat, this is a person, this one? Have you seen this animal before? Yes? Where? Is it at the zoo? Have you seen this*?]

S: Pernah [*Yes*]

I: Ya? Ayah atau mak ke pernah cakap nama haiwan ni? [*Yes? Did your father or mother tell you the name of the animal?*]

S: Bukan, cikgu tak cakap pun, tengok je. [*No, the teacher did not tell me, I've seen it*]

I: Oh, pergi dengan cikgu. Oh cikgu tak cakap. Okay, Shirena rasa ni haiwan apa? [*Oh, you went with the teacher. Oh, the teacher did not tell you. Okay, what do you think this animal is*?]

S: Monyet. [*Monkey*]

I: Monyet? Okay, jadi perkataan ni rasanya perkataan apa? [*Monkey? Okay, so what do you think this word is?*]

S: Tak tau. [*I don't know*]

I: Okay, this word is actually 'gorilla'. Shirena tau tak apa gorilla? Pernah dengar tak perkataan gorilla? [*Okay, this word is actually 'gorilla'. Do you know what a gorilla is? Have you heard of the word 'gorilla'?*]

S: Pernah. [*Yes*]

I: Pernah, okay, gorilla tu apa? [*You have, okay, what is a gorilla?*]

S: Gorilla tu... [*Gorilla is.....*]

I: Dia macam monyet ke? Tak, dia bukan monyet? Yang ini monyet ke gorilla rasanya? [*Is it like a monkey? No, it's not a monkey? Do you think this is a monkey or a gorilla?*]

S: Gorilla

I: Gorilla, okay. Emm..sekarang kita tengok gambar, kita tau gambar ni, lepas tu kita tau tajuk dia gorilla. Shirena rasa buku ni pasal apa? [*Gorilla, okay. Emm…let us look at the picture, we know what this picture is, then we know that the title is 'gorilla'. What do you think this book is all about?*]

S: Pasal Gorilla. [*It's about gorilla*]

(Shirena, Session 1, PB, IVW, 7-4-09)

I then went through the picture book page by page with Shirena. Shirena was interpreting the story of the book merely from the illustrations in the book. There was no

effort or no interest displayed by Shirena to look at the words or to try to decode the meaning of the words. However, her interpretations of the illustrations were always with a basis. She was not merely describing what she saw in the pictures, she was able to justify her description and interpretation based on the depth or the lack of previous knowledge that she had on what the illustrations were trying to convey. For instance, in the second page of the story book, the illustrations were portraying the girl and the father having their breakfast. When Shirena was asked the time of the day of the scene, she said 'morning' and when asked why she thought it was morning, she said because it was 'bright'. When later asked what the girl and her father was doing, she was not able to relate the picture of cereals, milk and the father reading newspaper as the girl and her father having breakfast because this was not culturally familiar to her. Although I tried to prompt her by asking her when she usually ate her cereal (she described the cereal box as 'koko crunch') in hope that she would be able to say 'breakfast', she said she had her 'koko crunch' in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon instead.

Another example in which her interpretations of the illustrations were very much influenced by her previous knowledge, was when she was trying to interpret the illustrations in which the gorillas were in the cage in the zoo. As she was not aware of the word zoo, she interpreted the pictures which the gorillas were in the cage in the zoo as them being in a jail. In this context, the image of a cage is related to her previous knowledge of the image of a jail. When asked why the gorillas were in jail, she said because the gorillas were bad. Here, her answers were connected to her understanding of a person being put in a jail based on her own background knowledge:

I: Dia tengok gorilla banyak-banyak..mmm..kenapa gorilla tu..mmm..gorilla tu dekat mana? [*She saw many gorillas..mmm…why is the gorilla…mmm..where is the gorilla*?]

S: Dekat penjara. [*At the prison*]

I: Dekat penjara? Mengapa Shirena kata dia dekat penjara? [*At the prison? Why did you say the gorilla is at the prison*?]

S: Sebab ni (pointing to the cage) [*Because of this (pointing to the cage)*]

I: Kenapa dia penjarakan gorilla tu? [*Why is the gorilla in the prison*?]

S: Sebab dia jahat. [*Because he's bad*]

(Shirena, Session 1, PB, IVW, 7-4-09)

In general, in this Session 1, Shirena merely used the pictures to interpret the story in the book. She did not attempt to interpret the words and if not highlighted, would not even look at the words in the book. Due to this, her interpretations of the illustrations were merely based on her understanding of the pictures in relation to her background knowledge of the scene, the person or the objects in the pictures. This background knowledge was also heavily grounded in the social and cultural contexts that she belongs to.

Session 2

In Session 2, instead of just discussing the illustrations in the book in a more detailed and in-depth manner, I decided to first read the words in the book out loud to Shirena page by page and pausing after each page while asking her if she knew what the sentences meant. Although Shirena was not able to read most of the words in the book, when read to, she was able to know the meaning of quite a number of words, for instance, read, books, father, busy, eat, happy birthday:

I: Okay, kita start dekat sini. [*Okay, let us start here*] Hannah loves gorilla, she reads books about gorillas, she watched gorillas on television and she drew pictures of gorillas, but she had never seen a real gorilla.

        Her father didn't have time to take her to see one at the zoo. He didn't have time for anything. Apa dia cakap dekat sini? Hannah tu siapa? [*What does it say here? Who is Hannah*?]

S: (Point at the girl in the book)

I: Okay, dia cerita pasal Hannah tu suka apa? [*Okay, the story is about Hannah liking what*?]

S: Suka....gorilla [*Liking…gorilla*]

I: Gorilla..ok. So she reads books about gorillas, she watched gorillas on television, she drew pictures of gorilla. So Hannah buat apa? [*So, what is Hannah doing?*]

S: Baca buku [*Reading a book*]

I: Baca buku gorilla. Mana Shirena tau dia baca buku gorilla? [*Reading a book on gorilla. How do you know it is a book on gorilla?*]

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S: Gambar ni [*This picture*]

I: Oh, gambar ni,okay. [*Oh, this picture, okay.*] Her father didn't have time

        to take her to see one at the zoo, he didn't have time for everything.

   Father tu siapa? [*Who is 'father'*]

S: Abah dia [*Her father*]

(Shirena, Session 2, PB, IVW, 14-4-09)

She was later able to connect these words to the illustrations in the book and had a
better understanding of the story in the book. She could now see the connection between
one illustration to the other and how this connection forms the story in the book. She was
now able to identify the main characters in the story and how these characters form the
core of the story in the book. Thus, towards the end of this session, Shirena was able to
give context to the illustrations in the book. Her interpretations of the illustrations now
were no longer based on her background knowledge only, they were also related to the
story in the book.

Session 3

In the third session or the last session for this picture book, *Gorilla*, Shirena was
asked to either write or draw what she had understood of the story in *Gorilla*. Shirena
chose to write, however, it was not of her own words but words in the book. Shirena
copied the words on page 11 of the book:
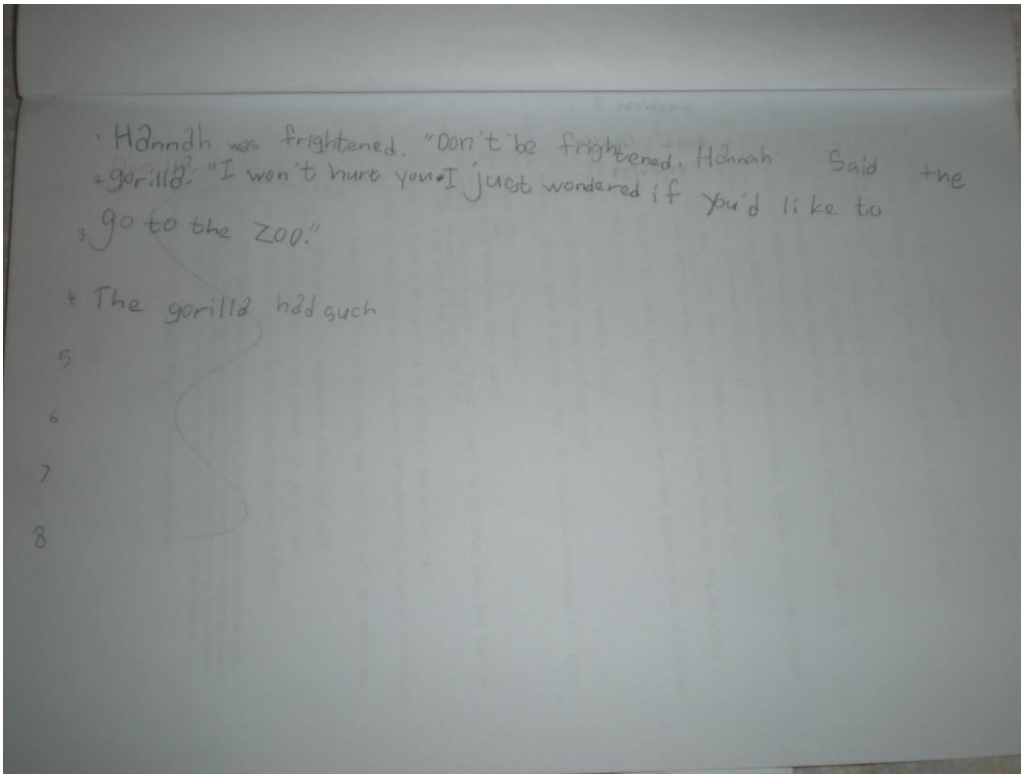
(Shirena, Session 3, PB, DA, 21-4-09)

When asked to read the words she had copied, at first she was hesitant but after much assurance that she would not be penalized for anything that she said in the session, she then started to 'read' the sentences that she copied in her first language, Bahasa Melayu. These sentences that she read in Bahasa Melayu were actually a description of the illustration that was in the same page as the words that she copied.

Shirena's decision to write words reflected her understanding of what reading is. She understood reading as decoding the words, and although she interpreted the story mostly based on her understanding of the illustrations, she still believed that the story in the book is in the words rather than the illustrations.

Wordless Picture Book (Flotsam by David Weisner)

Session 1

In this first session, like the prior first session with a new type of picture book, Shirena was first asked to look through the book on her own. She was given about five to ten minutes to do this. After this, I started the session by looking together with Shirena at the cover of the book. Shirena was able to point to me the title of the book on the cover when asked. She was also able to read the alphabets in the title of the book. However, when she was asked the title of the book, she said she did not know. I then read the title of the book, *Flotsam*, for her and asked her what she thought it meant, she said it was a book about a fish. This interpretation was probably due to the fact that the cover of the book (picture below) has a huge picture of a fish and the title was on top of the picture. In this context, she was trying to use the illustrations on the cover to deduce not only the title of the book but also the main story in the book.
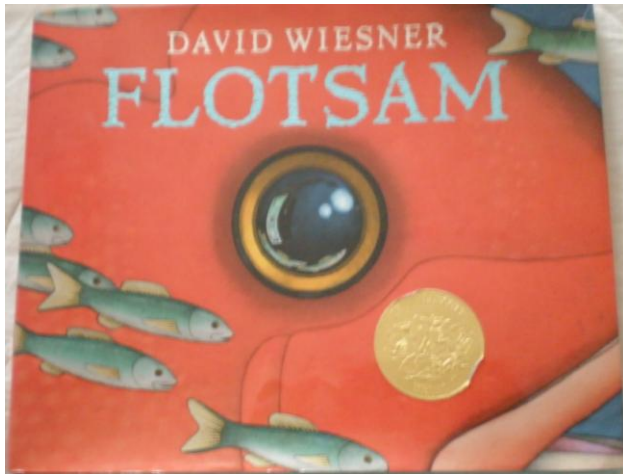
Flotsam by David Wiesner (cover)

In general, Shirena was able to understand what the illustrations were trying to convey in each of the pages. Nevertheless, like her earlier first session with the picture

book *Gorilla*, these interpretations were limited to her background knowledge on the scene or the objects of the illustrations. For instance, in describing the picture of a penguin, she said it was a picture of a 'duck'. This was probably due to the penguin's mouth and feet that bear some similarities to a duck. Though penguin and duck are in the same family of bird, Shirena was not able to reach that specificity in her description of the illustration as her background knowledge was limited to 'duck' and had not expanded to 'penguin'. This highlights the social and cultural contexts of learning and in Shirena's case, penguin is not something which she can find in her immediate surroundings or in the country she lives in.

Session 2

As *Flotsam* is a wordless picture book, in this second session, the focus was still on the illustrations. In this second session, I allowed Shirena to have full control of the book in which she was the one flipping the pages while telling me the story in the book. When she was asked about the story in the book, she recited the story by referring to the illustrations on the cover first before moving to the other pages. Shirena, however, did not say anything about the title of the book:

> When asked to tell the story again, she did not say the title though she started her story by referring to the illustration on the cover of the book.
> (Shirena, Session 2, WPB, OT, 5-3-09)

In this second session, Shirena was able to see the relationship between one illustration to the other as compared to the first session in which her understanding of the story was very much segmented by the pages of the book. Shirena now was able to have

a flow and was more confident in her interpretations of the illustrations in relation to the flow of the story:

> I'm really surprised at Shirena today. Shirena usually needed a fair amount of prompting before I could get her to express her thoughts. But I thought in this session, I'd give her a bit of freedom and allow her to tell her own story (and to flip the pages on her own). At first, she was a bit unsure as what to do but as soon as she started the story and flipping those pages on her own, there was not much I had to do but listen.
> (Shirena, Session 2, WPB, FN, 5-5-09)

In this session also, Shirena had displayed a deeper understanding of the illustrations in the context of the story as a whole. This understanding was due to her being able to relate the new knowledge she acquired in the first session to her interpretations of the illustrations and the story. For instance, in Session 1, she said the penguins were birds, but in this session, at first she said they were birds, then corrected herself by saying they were penguins and related them to a television series, *Pingu*, that have penguins as the main characters. Given the time, Shirena was able to relate new knowledge and previous knowledge to acquire better understanding of the story in the book.

Session 3

This third session had to be broken up into two parts, one took place on Friday, 8 May 2009 and the other one took place on Tuesday, 12 May 2009. This was because Shirena took a while to do her drawing on Friday and was unable to finish the drawing before my session with her ended. I could only resume my session on Tuesday as I was only allowed to have sessions with the children in the school on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

In the first part of Session 3, Shirena started by drawing a picture of a big fish. I usually gave the other students about ten minutes to do their drawing and most students would be done with their drawing before the ten minutes were up. But Shirena continued to draw towards the end of my 30-minute session with her. But I did not want to stop Shirena after ten minutes because it seemed she was really into her drawing. At times she would pause and flip the pages of the book before continuing with her drawing. At the end of 30 minutes, I had to stop her as it was nearing recess time and she needed to go off for her recess. She had also looked very restless as she heard most of her friends outside the room calling her and asking her to go to the canteen with them. I kept the drawing and told her that the session would continue the coming Tuesday.

On Tuesday, the second part of Session 3 took place; Shirena came to the session and continued with her drawing. She drew a picture of a starfish in addition to the big fish that she drew in the first part of the session. She then started coloring the big fish in red and the starfish in orange. She took more than 15 minutes to finish coloring the fish and the starfish. She then started to color the ocean. The ocean is the entire remaining blank parts of the paper. Thus this coloring took a long time and I asked her to stop five minutes before my session with her ended. I then asked her to tell me the story in her drawing. She said the fish and the starfish were the same fish and starfish in the book. She even flipped the pages of the book to show the exact starfish in the book that she based her drawing on. Shirena was able to relate her drawing and the story in the book. Her description of the story in this session was consistent with that in our earlier session.

(Shirena, Session 3, WPB, DA, 8-5-09 & 12-5-09)

At the end of this session, it was observed that Shirena was more comfortable and confident in expressing her thoughts as compared to the earlier sessions where she was quiet and slightly reserved and was very careful in trying to give the 'right' answers.

Comic (Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd by Bill Matheny)

Session 1(Demolition Devil)

This is the first session using the comic genre. When asked, Shirena said she had never actually 'read' a comic and that she only flipped through the pages to look at the pictures in the comic. Shirena first looked through the comic by herself before both of us looked at each of the pages of the comic book.

As with the other types of picture books, the session started when I asked Shirena if she knew the title of the story. Shirena did not know the title and was not even able to point to me the title of the story. When looking at the pages in the comic book, Shirena was having trouble focusing her eyes on the sequence of illustrations in the pages of the comic book. As the comic book has several illustrations in one page (in the case of this comic book, at least five illustrations per page), Shirena was not quite sure where to begin looking and where to look next. I then had to point to her the sequence of the illustrations in each page so that she knew the flow of the illustrations, and hopefully the flow of the story.

When asked about the characters in the story, Shirena said she did not know the name of the characters but she had seen some of them on television. Shirena called the characters 'Bugs Bunny' as 'Bunny', the 'Tasmanian Devil' as 'Dog' and the 'Duck' as 'Penguin'. Her interpretations of the characters were very much based on the visuals of the characters. The Bugs Bunny obviously is a bunny. On the other hand, as she has no background knowledge of the characters the Tasmanian Devil and the Duck, she addressed them according to animals with which she was familiar. Thus, the Tasmanian Devil was seen as a dog, and because the Duck in this story was black and white and has a beak, Shirena saw it as a penguin. It is interesting to note that she was transferring the new word, penguin, that she acquired in Session 2 of wordless picture book to this session.

At the end of this session, Shirena said the comic book was much more difficult than the wordless picture book as in the comic book there were a lot of 'alphabets' while in wordless picture book, there was none and thus this made it easier to be read. According to her 'alphabets' were the cause of difficulty in reading a book:

I: Mana senang baca? Yang Gorilla ke, buku yang ada fish dengan camera ke, ataupun yang comic? [*Which one did you find easy to read? The book on gorilla or the book with fish and camera*?]

S: Buku budak yang camera tu [*The book with boy and camera*]

I: Apasal buku tu sedap? [*Why do you like that book*?]

S: Sebab dia tak ada huruf [*Because it has no words*]

I: Dia tak ada huruf, kalau ada gambar je lagi senang baca ya? [*It has no words, would it be easier to read a book with pictures only?*]

S: (nodded her head)

I: Kalau ada huruf susah? [*It's difficult if it has words*?]

S: (nodded her head)

I: Apasal susah? Susah nak tau cerita dia? [*Why is it difficult? Is it difficult to know the story?*]

S: (nodded her head)

I: Kalau tak ada huruf senang nak tau cerita dia? [*If the book has no words, it is easier to know the story?*]

S: (nodded her head)

(Shirena, Session 1, Comic, IVW, 15-5-09)

Session 2

Comic (Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd by Bill Matheny)

In this second session, of the genre comic, I decided to change the earlier story of 'Demolition Devil' to the above mentioned title. The change was due to not only Shirena but the other five participants of the study were having difficulty comprehending the story in the *Demolition Devil*. The words and the illustrations were too culturally unfamiliar to Shirena and the other participants that they created too high a level of difficulty and unfamiliarity for the participants' level. In addition, the main character in the story, Bugs Bunny, used dialogue that consisted of words which were difficult to understand. These words were spelled wrongly as they were spelled according to the sound of Bugs Bunny's speech. For instance, for the expression "This weather is perfect for catching up on my laundry", it was written as "Dis wedder is poifect for catchin' up on my laundry!". Thus for this Session 2 on the comic genre, I decided to use a different story but from the same book, 'Bugs and Buddies'.

Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd by Bill Matheny was chosen because the story was a bit shorter and the words were simpler using the standard English spelling. In addition, the storyline of this comic bore similarity to the well-known children's story, 'Jack and the Beanstalk'.

I asked Shirena to first look through the comic. She took about five minutes to do so. I then asked her for the title of the story. Shirena said 'benih' (seed). When asked to

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point to the word 'benih', she pointed to the title of the comic. I then asked her to read the title, she said she didn't know how to read it:

I: Okay, sekarang ni, kita tengok comic ni, okay, apa tajuk dia, apa tajuk cerita tu? [*Okay, let us look at this comic, okay, what is the title, what is the title of the story*?]

S: Benih [*Seeds*]

I: Benih, mana dia tulis benih? [*Seeds, where did it say seeds*?]

S: (pointed to the title of the comic)

I: Ok, Shirena baca ni benih ke? [*Ok, did you read this (title) as seeds*?]

S: Tak tau. [*I don't know*]

(Shirena, Session 2, Comic, 21-5-09)

The story started with one of the two gophers in the story finding some magic beans. As the title was written in the middle of the illustrations where the magic beans were found and later grew into a huge and tall tree, Shirena associated this with the title and thus deduced that the title of the story was seed as it is from seed that we get plants.

I then asked Shirena to tell me the story in the comic and while she was doing this, I pointed to the illustrations one by one according to the right sequence. I did this as it was noticed that in the previous session, Shirena was not able to focus her eyes on the illustrations according to the correct sequence when she was trying to comprehend the story in the comic:

Shirena was able to grasp the story from the illustrations but I had to point to her the sequence of the illustrations, if not her eyes would be focusing all over the places.
(Shirena, Session 2, Comic, OT, 21-5-09)

In general, Shirena was able to get the story in the comic. When asked if she had seen or heard the story 'Jack and the Beanstalk' (and I gave her a brief description of the story), she said she had never heard of such story. Shirena's understanding of the story was very much influenced by her background knowledge on the topic that was used as context in the story. For instance, she referred to 'onion' as 'carrot susu' (milk carrot) as the onion was drawn almost like a carrot, she simply interpreted it as 'milk carrot' – milk for the color and carrot for the shape.

At the end of the session, when asked among *Gorilla, Flotsam,* and *Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd*, which was the easiest to 'read', she said *Flotsam* as it has no words. Again, she mentioned the fact that the words had made it difficult for her to read a book. Between *Gorilla* and *Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd*, *Gorilla* according to Shirena was much easier as the words were bigger while the comic has smaller and more words:

I: Okay, dengan teacher Shirena dah tengok cerita gorilla, ingat tak cerita

       gorilla tu lepas tu kita tengok cerita pasal ikan dengan camera tu,

       ingat tak? [*Okay, Shirena, with me you have looked at the gorilla story, do*

       you still remember the story, then we looked at the story about a fish and a

       camera, can you remember that?]

S: (nodded her head)

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I: Lepas tu kita tengok cerita ni pulak, komik. Komik ni ada macam ni. Mana yang paling senang sekali Shirena nak baca? [*Now, we are going to look at this story, comic. This comic has this. Which one did you find the easiest to read*?]

S: Yang tak ada huruf [*The one without the words*]

I: Yang tak ada huruf, okay, kenapa yang tak ada huruf tu senang nak baca? [*The one without the words, okay, why is the book without words easier to read*?]

S: Sebab...sebab... [*Because…because…*]

I: Sebab Shirena tengok gambar je? [*Because you only need to see the pictures*?]

S: (nodded her head)

I: Gambar lagi senang, ya? [*Is looking at pictures easier*?]

S: (nodded her head)

I: Kalau ada perkataan ni susah ke? [*If there are words, it's difficult*?]

S: (nodded her head)

I: Susah nak baca ya, okay, perkataan dalam yang ini (comic) dengan perkataan dalam Gorilla tu mana satu yang senang nak baca lagi? [*It's difficult ya, okay, the words in this (comic) and the words in the book Gorilla, which ones are easier to read*?]

S: Gorilla

I: Okay, kenapa Gorilla tu senang lagi? [*Ok, why is it easier in Gorilla*?]

S: Sebab tulisan dia besar [*Because the writing is big*]

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I: Tulisan dia besar, yang ini tulisan dia kecil-kecil ya? [*The writing is big,*

this one the writing is small, ya?]

S: (nodded her head)

(Shirena, Session 2, Comic, IVW, 21-5-09)

Session 3

In this session, Shirena was asked to draw or write what she had understood of the story in the comic *Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd*. Shirena said she wanted to write so I let her do so. Shirena took about twenty minutes to complete her writing. This writing turned out to be sentences that she copied from the speech bubbles in the comic. She copied the first two speech bubbles in the comic.
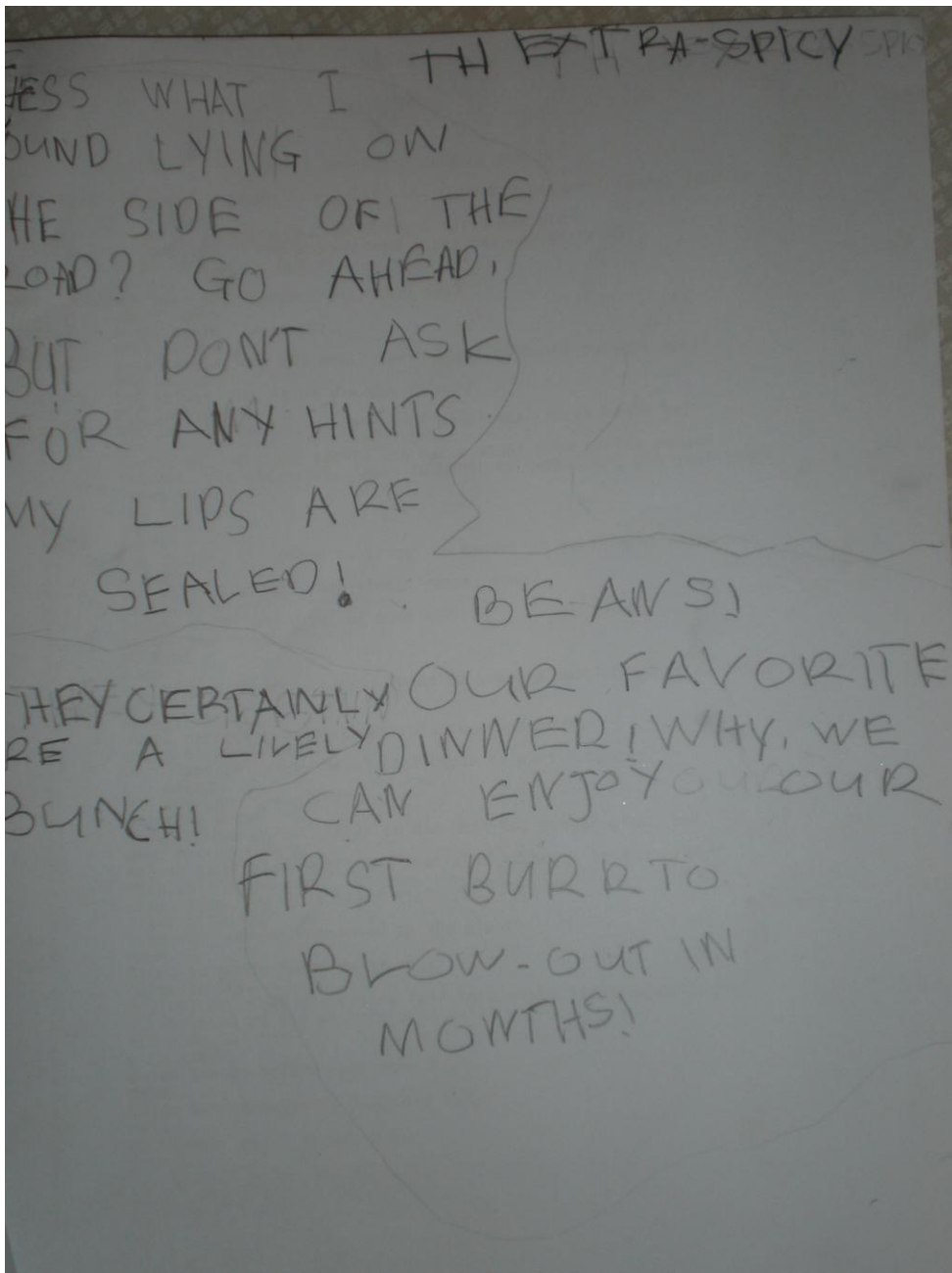
(Shirena, Session 3, Comic, DA, 26-6-09)

When asked what she had written, she pointed to the speech bubbles from which she copied the sentences. When asked what the sentences meant, at first she said she did not know but after much prompting, she was able to relate the sentences that she copied

to the illustrations that came together with the sentences and described to me what happened in these two particular scenes from which she had copied the speech bubbles. From this point, Shirena was able to recall the rest of the story with the help from the illustrations in the comic book.

Shirena unlike Haikal was not focusing much on the 'sound effect' in the comic. She was more concerned with how that sound effect is related to the whole story as well as the feelings of the characters. For instance when asked to describe the meaning of the word 'Kaboooom' she said 'sakit' (pain) instead of saying the sound of the giant falling down from the top of the tree to the ground:

I: Tikus masuk dalam lubang, went into a hole, and then the giant buat apa? [*The gopher went into a hole, and then what did the giant do*?]

S: Terjatuh [*He fell*]

I: Alright, and then apa jadi dengan giant, ni apa ni? Apa dia tulis ni? (pointing to the word 'Kaboooom') [*Alright, what happened to the giant after that, what is this? What is written here? (pointing to the word 'Kaboooom')*]

S: Sakit [*Painful*]

I: Sakit, okay, K-A ni bunyi apa? [*Painful, ok, how does K-A sound like*?]

S: Ouch

I: Ouch, okay, siapa yang sakit? [*Ouch, okay, who is in pain*?]

S: Giant tu [*The giant*]

(Shirena, Session 3, IVW, 26-6-09)

Although Shirena relied heavily on visuals to interpret the story in this comic book as well as the earlier picture book, she always chose to write when asked to describe the story in writing or drawing. This observation can be interpreted as to how Shirena viewed the concept of reading. Although visuals were what she focused on to interpret the story, she believes that the story is actually in the words. This assumption is further supported when Shirena said a book is difficult because of the words and the more words a book has, the more difficult the book becomes. In this context, the difficulty of reading words is associated to the difficulty in understanding the story in the book.

Online picture book (The Little Red Hen by Starfall.com)

Session 1

Shirena came for the session looking very excited when she saw the laptop on the table in the room. I asked Shirena if she had ever used a laptop before and she said no. I then asked her to try and move the cursor using the mouse but she was struggling to do this and later told me that she did not know how to do it. So I decided to conduct the session with me doing the page changing with the mouse and going page by page with Shirena.

We started by looking at the title page of the online picture book. When asked to point to the title, Shirena was able to do so. When asked what the title meant, she said 'ayam' (hen). When asked how she knew the meaning of the title, she pointed to the picture of the hen next to the title:

I: Sekarang kita nak tengok buku cerita tapi dia dekat computer, mana satu

        tajuk dia? [*Now we are going to look at a story book but it is in a*

        computer, which one is the title?]

S: Ni [*This one*] (pointing to the title of the online picture book)

I: Okay, apa ni? [*Okay, what is this*?]

S: Ayam [*Chicken*]

I: Ayam, mana Shirena tau ayam? Dekat sini ada tak perkataan ayam?

        [*Chicken, how do you know it's chicken? Do you see any word here that*

        says chicken?]

S: (silence)

I: Ni tau tak apa? [*Do you what this is*?] H-E-N, hen

S: Hen

I: Hen maknanya apa? [*What does 'hen' mean*?]

S: Yang ini [*This one*] (pointed to the picture of the hen)

(Shirena, Session 1, OPB, IVW, 30-6-09)

I then went through word by word in the title. When I showed the word 'red' and told her that the word had got to do with color and asked her the color of the hen in the picture, she said 'chocolate' (brown). I then told her that 'red' is 'merah' in Bahasa Melayu. When I read the word 'little' and asked her what it meant, Shirena did not know. I then prompted an answer from her by asking her if the word 'little' meant 'besar' (big) or 'kecil' (small). She answered 'kecil' (small). I finally asked her what she thought the title of the story was and she said 'ayam merah kecil' (little red hen).

In this first session using the online picture book Shirena first used the illustrations to deduce the story in the book. Nevertheless, when she heard the sentences for each of the page being read out, she was able to relate those sentences to the illustrations in that particular page. Shirena seemed to be beaming with excitement when she was able to make this connection. At times, she could not wait for the sentences to finish being read out to tell me the story in that particular page.

Shirena also at many instances would use the illustrations to understand the meaning of words in the online picture book. For example, when asked for the meaning of the word 'yummy', she said 'yummy tu macam sedap' (yummy is like delicious). When asked how she knew this, she pointed to the illustrations in the page where the other animals were smiling while smelling the aroma of the baked muffins. Even at the end of the online picture book where there was the phrase 'The End' and the picture of the red hen eating the muffins, Shirena at first said the phrase 'The End' meant that the 'the hen is eating the muffins'. Only when I prompted her by saying that it was the last page and it was the end of the story, then only she said 'tamat' (the end):

I: Senang je, lepas ni, apa ni? [*It's easy, after this, what is this*?]

S: Dia makan [*It's eating*]

I: Dia makan, so dia tulis sini 'The end', maknanya apa? [*It's eating, but it is written here 'The end', what does it mean*?]

S: The end...mmm...

I: Selalu dekat buku bila habis aje, dia tulis 'the end', maknanya? *[Usually, at the end of a book, there will be 'the end' written, what does it mean*?]

S: Tamat [*The end*]

(Shirena, Session 1, OPB, IVW, 30-6-09)

On the whole in this first session using the online picture book, Shirena relied heavily on the illustrations to comprehend the story in the book. But when she heard the sentences being read out, she was able to relate them to the illustrations and her eyes could be seen sparkling when she was able to make this connection. In this context, Shirena initially did not know many words in the online picture book but because the book offers audio input in addition to visual and written input, she was able to utilize all these input and comprehend some key words in the story like 'hen' and 'muffins'.

Session 2

As this was my second session with Shirena using the online picture book and she was able to understand the story quite well in the first session, I decided to boost her confidence a bit in computer handling. I asked Shirena to try to move the cursor using the mouse on her own and to practice on her own before I started the session. I noticed that she was struggling in the beginning and at times I had to help her to move the mouse but she was able to get the hang of it after a few times moving and clicking the mouse on her own.

I then went through the online picture book page by page with her, this time focusing on the words and encouraging her to read the simple and short sentences on her own. Shirena, unlike in the earlier sessions, was more willing to try and was not that

scared of making mistakes anymore. My focus was to highlight words that she could relate to the illustrations in the book so that it would be easier for her to understand and remember, for example, words like 'hen', 'red', 'duck', 'turkey', and 'goose'. In addition, these words (and the illustrations) were repeated many times in the online picture book and this gave Shirena plenty of opportunity to see and hear the words in relation to the related illustrations:

I: Ni [*This*] (pointing to the picture of the hen)?

S: Ayam [*Chicken*], chicken

I: Dalam Bahasa Inggeris dia? [*The English word*?]

S: Chicken

I: Hen

S: Hen

I: Hen. Yang ini? [*Hen. This one*?]

S: Kecil [Small]

I: Bahasa Inggeris dia? [*The English word*?]

S: Mmmm...

I: Little

S: Little

I: Okay, cuba Shirena baca [*Okay, why don't you try to read Shirena*]

S: Little … an

I: Red

S: An

I:	Hen, pandai, okay. So sekarang ni, little red hen ni cakap dengan apa? [*Hen, clever, okay. So now to whom did the little red hen speak to*?]

S:	Dengan itik [*With the duck*]

I:	Itik dalam Bahasa Inggeris apa? [*What is duck in English*?]

S:	Penguin

I:	Ha? The little red hen asked a duck

S:	Duck

I:	So itik dalam Bahasa Inggeris apa? [*So what is 'itik' in English*?]

S:	Duck

I:	Duck, okay dia minta tolong duck tu buat apa? [*Duck, okay, the little red hen asked the duck to help her with what*?]

S:	Angkat mmm...jagung [*To lift mmm..the corn*]

I:	C-O-R-N ni corn maknanya [*C-O-R-N, what does it mean*?]

S:	Corn

I:	Maknanya apa? [*Which means*?]

S:	Jagung [*Corn*]

(Shirena, Session 2, OPB, IVW, 2-7-09)

At the end of this session, Shirena was able to identify the words, read the words, relate the words to the illustrations and most importantly knew what they meant. This knowledge was very liberating on Shirena as she felt she had some inner control in her progress in becoming literate in the second language.

Session 3

In this session, I did not straight away ask Shirena to write or draw what she had understood as the story in the online picture book. Instead, I went through the online picture book page by page with Shirena first before asking her to draw or write the story in the book. Although still struggling with the reading, she was able to recognize the four words that I focused on in the second session (hen, duck, turkey, goose) much better in this session.

I then asked her to draw or write the story in *The Little Red Hen*. At first, Shirena said she wanted to draw which I found very surprising considering the fact that she chose to write in all the other sessions with the other types of picture books (except for wordless picture book). But when she was done with her 'drawing' (picture below), it turned out to be copied sentences from the book (again). Only this time, she decided to copy the title page of the book. She had copied not only the title but also all the other information in the title page (for example, the illustrators and by whom the story was retold).

The
little Red
Hen
An English FolkTale
Retold by
starfall

Illustrated by
Michael Ramirez
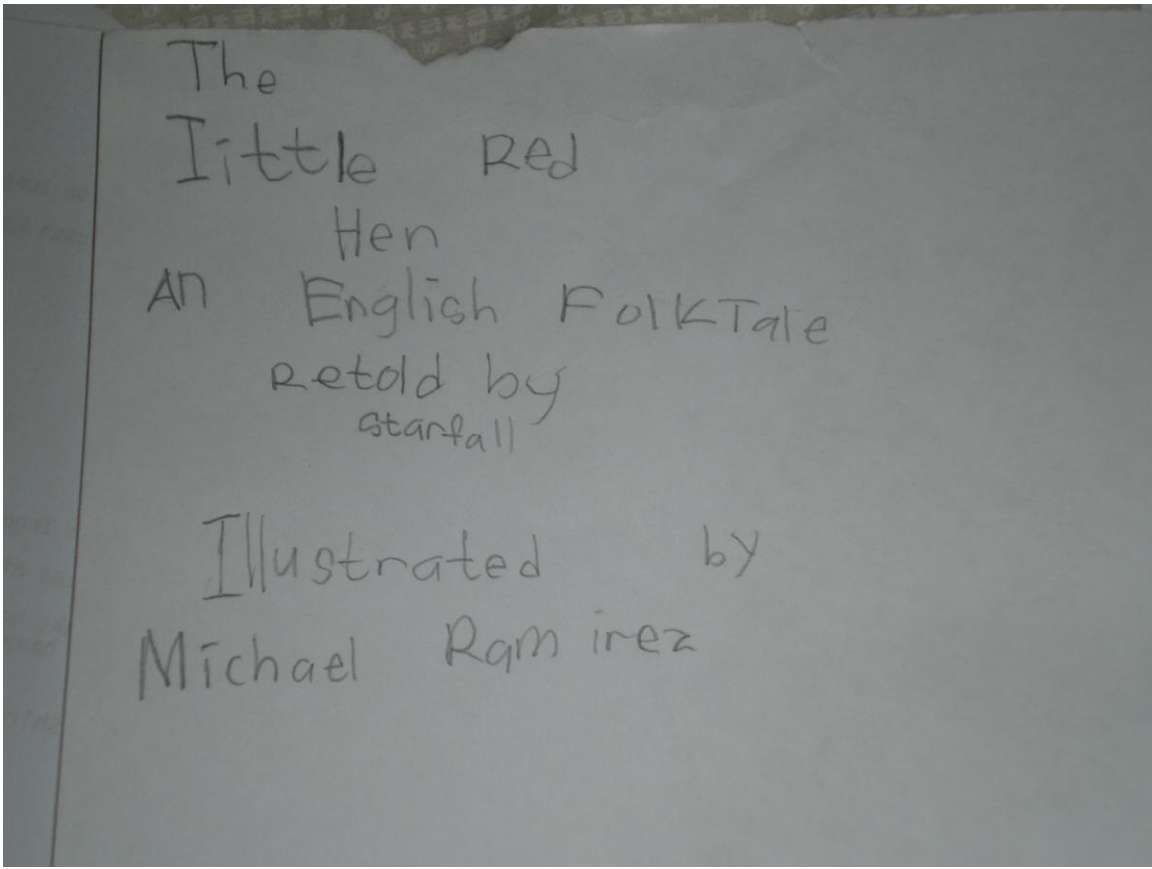
(Shirena, Session 3, OPB, DA, 2-7-09)

I then asked Shirena what she had written, she told me 'ayam merah' (red hen). When asked what the other sentences were, she said she did not know. I then asked her what the 'ayam merah' did in the book, and she was able to tell me the story from the very beginning until the end without much prompting and she also used the four words (hen, duck, turkey, goose) which I focused on in the earlier session in her recall of the story.

As this was the end of my session with her using all the four types of picture books, I asked her again which of those books she found the easiest to read and to

understand; Shirena again said 'the book with no words' (Wordless picture book – *Flotsam*).

Shirena's Evolvement as a Reader

Although Shirena was identified as needing an intensive program in reading and writing in her first language, Bahasa Melayu, this should not be a basis to judge her ability to interpret visuals and to use visuals in her effort to understand words and stories that were written in her second language, English Language. This was evident in her effort to 'read' the stories in the sessions with her using four types of picture books.

Shirena's understanding of reading is the ability to read words and in the beginning, reading to her was always difficult – 'the words are difficult'. As the teaching of reading in school focused very much on the ability to sound out words and the ability to make the letter and sound connection, Shirena who was still at a stage where she could not make the letter and sound connection, found reading not only difficult but also a daunting experience.

Shirena, however, read visuals much easier than words. It was never difficult to get Shirena to tell the story in the picture books because her recall of the story would dominantly be based on her interpretations of the illustrations or the visuals in the book. As she relied heavily on illustrations to comprehend the story in the books, her interpretations of the visuals (and the story) were very much grounded on her social and cultural contexts instead of the context of the story in the book.

Although initially Shirena saw the words as 'problems', by helping her to use the visuals to interpret the words and eventually the story in the picture books, Shirena was able to see that the visuals were another form of input to help her comprehend the story in the picture books. Towards the end of the sessions with her, when Shirena was able to make the connection among the words, sounds and illustrations, these input now work in a bootstrapping manner (Paivio, 1979) where one will help to push the other to achieve greater understanding of the story.

Shirena as a Teacher

Shirena is an example of how a child not being able to follow a prescribed reading program based on a very narrow definition of early literacy was labeled as a weak learner. In this context, learning to read (and write) is assumed to come about by means of direct teaching of the alphabetic system and sound-letter relations. The curriculum specification for Reading Component of the English Curriculum for Primary Schools (KBSR) clearly states the importance of students' ability to recognize letters and to know the sounds of letters. The rationale given for this is so that pupils can string together these sounds and produce a word. "The teaching of reading in the early stages begins at the word and phrase levels before progressing to sentence recognition and reading at the paragraph level" (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 6). In this context, reading is seen as a sequence of events where a child progresses from one stage to the other before the child reaches the ability to read. In reality, the reading process is not as simple as this; reading is a complex process. Reading is a process that requires the synchronization of several

input which are orchestrated by the child himself or herself in his or her quest to become literate (Clay, 1998).

In the twelve sessions with Shirena, she had shown the ability to comprehend the meaning of words and story without following the sequence of letters, sound, words, phrase, sentence and paragraphs. The 'reading' in the twelve sessions was not controlled, Shirena was given the space to interpret any input in the book which she found the easiest to comprehend. In addition, the term 'reading' was not restricted to words and Shirena was allowed to read the visuals in the books and later used this reading to gain a better understanding of the words and the story in the book.

What Shirena has shown is if a child is not able to read in a particular reading program, it need not necessarily be because of the child but because of the method. As Clay (1991) states, when teachers say a child is not able to make a progress in reading and writing, too often that is only true if the child has to learn by that teacher's program. In the case of Shirena, I have learnt that there is probably another route by which a child could learn and in this case, the instruction would start not where the teacher is, but where the child is.

Conclusions

This chapter analyzes the data obtained from the six emergent second language readers while they were engaged in four types of picture books over twelve individual sessions with the researcher. The findings from the study are discussed in two parts, Part

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1 and Part 2. Part 1 discussed the emergent understanding of how the emergent second language readers use visuals to build their second language literacy and how social and cultural contexts shape emergent second language readers' visual literacy. Part 2 of this chapter discussed the main findings from two of the six participants. By profiling the two selected learners, deeper understanding on how the emergent second language readers draw on visuals to have a better understanding of words in specific and the books in general is obtained. In addition, the data from the two learners also allow for a more in-depth understanding on how the emergent second language readers' interpretations of visuals are very much influenced by their social and cultural background.

Based on the data discussed in this chapter, emergent second language readers' visual literacy practices of these selected 6 learners could be summarized in Figure 4.4.
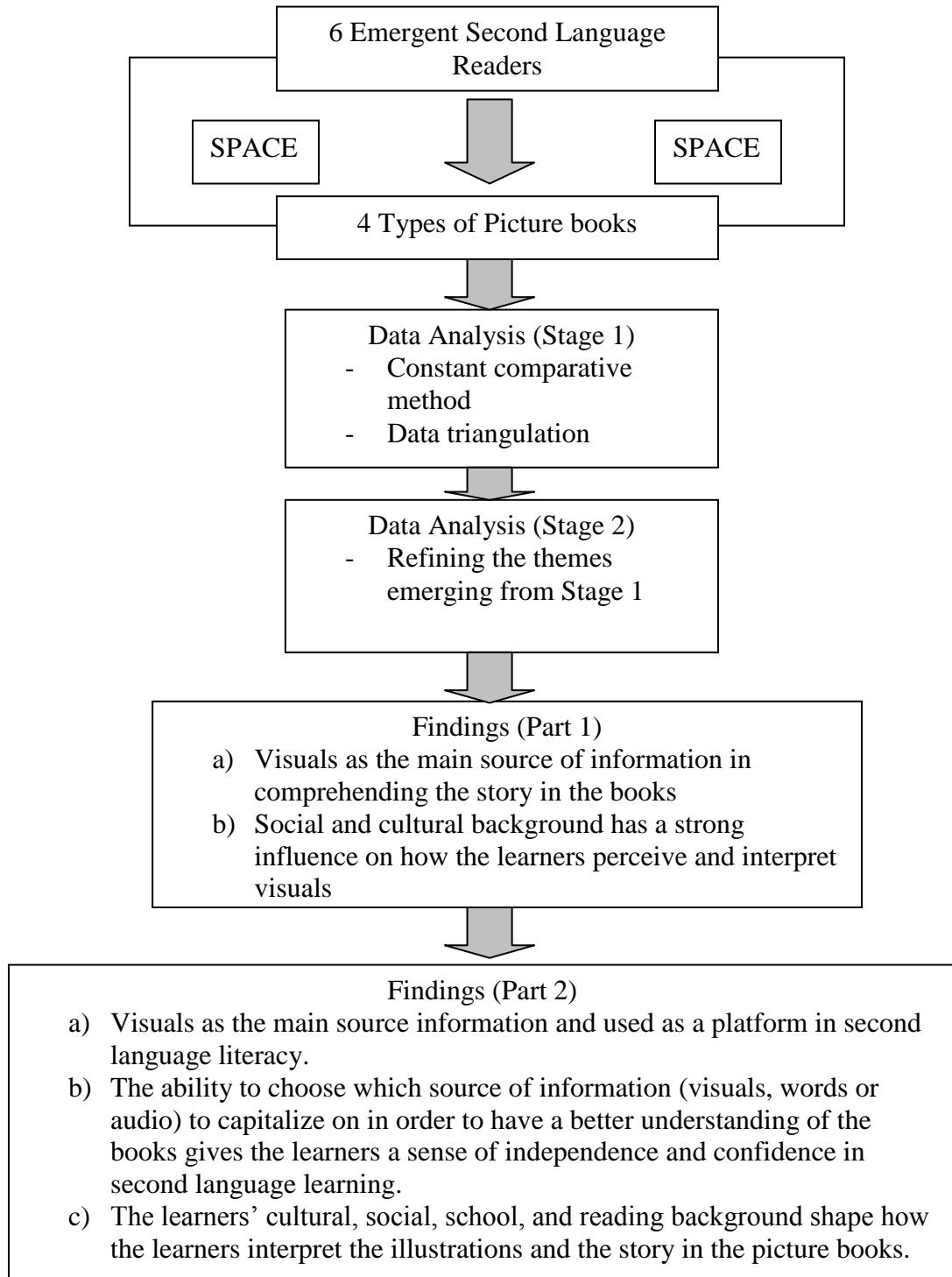
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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  6 Emergent Second Language  │
│           Readers            │
└─────────────────────────────┘
          ⇓
┌──────────┐          ┌──────────┐
│  SPACE   │          │  SPACE   │
└──────────┘          └──────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────┐
│    4 Types of Picture books  │
└─────────────────────────────┘
          ⇓
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Data Analysis (Stage 1)    │
│   -  Constant comparative    │
│      method                  │
│   -  Data triangulation      │
└─────────────────────────────┘
          ⇓
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Data Analysis (Stage 2)    │
│   -  Refining the themes     │
│      emerging from Stage 1   │
└─────────────────────────────┘
          ⇓
┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Findings (Part 1)             │
│  a) Visuals as the main source of          │
│     information in comprehending the       │
│     story in the books                     │
│  b) Social and cultural background has     │
│     a strong influence on how the          │
│     learners perceive and interpret        │
│     visuals                                │
└──────────────────────────────────────────┘
          ⇓
┌────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Findings (Part 2)                   │
│  a) Visuals as the main source information and       │
│     used as a platform in second language literacy.  │
│  b) The ability to choose which source of            │
│     information (visuals, words or audio) to         │
│     capitalize on in order to have a better          │
│     understanding of the books gives the learners    │
│     a sense of independence and confidence in        │
│     second language learning.                        │
│  c) The learners' cultural, social, school, and      │
│     reading background shape how the learners        │
│     interpret the illustrations and the story in     │
│     the picture books.                               │
└────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 4.4. Emergent Second Language Visual Literacy Practices.

In Part 1 of this chapter, the data from the emergent second language readers suggest that visuals are always the first source of information used to understand the story in the picture books. The emergent second language readers when presented with visuals and words would select visuals first in their attempt to understand the story in the book. This is true even for those who were able to recognize most of the words in the picture books. It is also noted that the ability to recognize words and read the words for some learners could not be equated to understanding the meaning of the words in the context of the story. In this context, the focus of the teaching of English according to the syllabus is evident, in which children in Year 1 must be able to string together sounds and produce a word (Ministry of Education, 2003). However, when it comes to comprehending the story in the text, the emergent second language readers did not rely on this knowledge instead they relied heavily on the visuals to make sense of the story in the picture books. Part 1 of the chapter also discussed how visual literacy is deeply embedded in the social and cultural context. Just as other forms of literacy where it is more than just a process of encoding and decoding words, visual literacy is also deeply rooted in the reader's social and cultural contexts. In visual literacy, meanings need to be understood as inscribed between a particular social and cultural practice. In this study, the young learners' interpretations of the visuals were very much influenced by their social and cultural background and this eventually influenced how they interpret the story.

In Part 2 of this chapter, the emergent findings in Part 1 were further analyzed and discussed by constructing profiles from two of the six participants. The data from the two participants further explained how visuals are not only used as the main source of information, they are also used as a scaffold for better understanding of meaning of words and eventually better comprehension of the story in the picture books. Interaction between teacher and student on their understanding of the visuals can help the students to understand the meaning of the words in the books. Through questions and prompting by the teacher, emergent second language readers were able to use visual inputs to derive the meaning of the words in the picture books and this led to a better understanding of the story. In this context, there exists a relationship between visual skills and cognitive processes. Visual skills could lead to cognitive benefits which are transferable to other learning skills, namely reading and writing. Part 2 of this chapter also discusses how the freedom given to the emergent second language readers to choose which of the sources (visuals, words or audio) in the book to work with gives them a sense of independence and confidence in 'reading' the picture books although they did not know most of the words in the books. More importantly, visuals have allowed these readers to develop a sense of confidence to control and expand their emergent second language literacy. The influence of social and cultural contexts is also addressed in Part 2 of this chapter. The kinds of visuals (visual culture) these learners were exposed to – television, computer games, comics – and the degree of exposure to these visuals had a great influence on how the learners interpret the visuals in the picture books. In addition, the social contexts that these emergent second language readers belong to also have some bearing on how they view second language reading and how they approach second language reading.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Research Findings

The research findings in this chapter are summarized according to the two research questions developed for the study.

Research Question 1: How do emergent second language readers use visuals to build on their second language literacy?

For most young learners, high levels of attention to detail of print are unusual rather than common (Clay, 1991). Children's meaning-making systems are not necessarily made up of written words only (Vygotsky, 1978). As children naturally move between arts, music, drama and language as ways to make sense of the world and to explain their thoughts, a significant recognition should be given for the children's exploration in all modes of representation (Curtis & Carter, 2000; Kendrick & McKay, 2004). This could be observed with the emergent second language readers in the study where they focused on visuals first in their effort to understand the story in the text. The visuals in the books were used in several ways in the learners' effort to acquire second language literacy. As such, the concluding themes for Research Question 1 are:

1.   Visuals were used as a platform for literacy in a second language

The data from the two profiles as well as data from the other four young learners in this study clearly show that visuals were used as a platform in the process of

comprehending the meaning of written input in the book. In the twelve sessions using the four types of picture books, the young learners first focused on visuals before moving on to words in their effort to understand the story in the text. This is reflective of Ferreiro and Teberosky's (1983) study of children's literacy before going to school where they found that at the first level of asking children to read the story from a picture book, the children generated texts from the picture as well as from oral language. In this study, it was only in the second look through of the picture books and from the researcher's questioning and prompting that the young learners were able to use visuals to better understand the words and the story in the picture books. The relationship that the learners were then able to develop between the visuals and the words enabled them to not only know meaning of the words but also to better understand the story in the books (Chapter 4, pages 106-108).

In this context, there exists a relationship between visual skills and cognitive processes; visual skills could lead to cognitive benefits which are transferable to the skills of reading and writing (Paivio, 1979). Paivio's Dual Coding Theory explains this as the learner being engaged in a bootstrapping process. Here the learner's ability to comprehend the visuals facilitates the comprehension of the words. An important aspect in Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1979, 2006) is the belief that beginning readers learn to read concrete words by sight much faster when the words are accompanied by referent pictures than when paired only with pronunciation. Paivio asserts that combining pictures, mental imagery and verbal elaboration is an effective method in promoting understanding and learning from text by students of all levels. This could be seen in the

sessions with Hazeeq where although he was able to read aloud most of the words in the picture books, when asked to recall the story in the books, his recall was mostly based from the visuals rather than the words in the book (Chapter 4, page 108).

Bruner (1964) also stresses the importance of acknowledging the different modes of representation that one has to go through in the process of cognitive development. He highlights the fact that one goes through enactive representation first where information is understood mainly through actions and later moving on to iconic representation where events are best understood through perceptions and transformed images before reaching symbolic representation where understanding of a concept or experiences can be gained through language. In the sessions with the six young learners, five of the learners would interpret the story in the picture books using the visuals first before focusing on the words in the books (Chapter 4, pages 125-128, 145 & 181). Although Bruner (1964) also believes that this course of cognitive development is at times not linear in nature, it stresses the importance of acknowledging the significant role visuals play in the process of cognitive development. Similarly, Wyatt-Smith and Kimber (2009) believe that each of these different ways of representing meaning – image, gesture, sound, music, speech, and so forth – is a mode with its own unique features and can be called upon in any combination to make meaning.

2.   Visuals bridge the "confidence gap"

The subjectivity element of visuals allows one to interpret visuals without a clear boundary of right or wrong interpretations. The learners in this study felt that interpreting

visuals was easier because they were not subjected to providing the "right answers". This is evidenced when all the learners in the study, given the space and freedom to choose any input in the story book, chose to interpret the story using visuals first before focusing on the words in the picture book. In this context, the visuals allow the learners to have a sense of confidence in "reading" the books although they did not know most of the words in the books (Chapter 4, pages 131-132). One of the learners in this study, Shirena, expressed anxiety towards printed words because, to her, words made it difficult for her to read any book (Chapter 4, page 201). Because Shirena was allowed to interpret the story using visuals first before focusing on the words, she was more confident in reading the words in the picture books (Chapter 4, pages 209-211). This confidence generates interest in knowing the story better as well as having more confidence to attempt to comprehend the words in the picture books. At the end of the twelve sessions, Sherina as well as the other learners were observed to focus on the words on their own without any help or prompt from the researcher (Chapter 4, pages 129-134, 204-206,). More importantly, visuals have allowed the learners to develop a sense of confidence to control their own second language literacy processes and to expand their emergent second language literacy (Berger, 2005). This sense of self-confidence is seen as a crucial aspect in the development of literacy as literacy is much more than skill-oriented practice (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009), it is a cognitive process that puts the learners as active constructors of their own meaning (Berger, 2005; Clay, 1991; Piaget, 1954; Whitmore et al., 2005). Central to this active learning is a sense of self-confidence that learning can take place within the control of oneself.

Eskey (1986) in his discussion on challenges faced by second language readers explained how apart from the 'comprehension gap', second language readers are also faced with the 'confidence gap'. He noted that even highly competent first language readers may lack confidence when faced with second language texts and that this lack of confidence may hinder effective first language reading strategies and lead to unsuccessful second language reading behaviors. In this study, Danial was always using illustrations to deduce the story in the picture books. The choice to do this was not because he was unable to comprehend any of the words in the book, rather he did not have the confidence to do so and he was so scared of making mistakes. Danial felt a way for him not to make mistakes was not to attempt to read at all (Chapter 4, page 125). As illustrations are more subjective than words, the possibility of making 'mistakes' is reduced according to the young learners' understanding. Thus, they are more willing to interpret the story based on the illustrations first rather than on the words in the picture books (Chapter 4, pages 125-128, 171-175 & 209-211).

3.   Visuals can lead to autonomy in learning

Visuals were used as another source of information in reading books. The findings show that the learners were made to realize that they could choose sources of information in the picture books in their effort to comprehend the story in the books. By providing visuals as one of the resources that they could use in comprehending the story, the young learners were made to realize that in reading a book, they did not have to start with the words, they could start with the visuals in their effort to comprehend the story in the book. In the case of online picture books used in this study where the books have

visual, audio as well as written input, the learners were able to have more sources of information to choose from in the quest to comprehend the story. Thus, the ability to choose or to combine sources of information in the picture books creates a sense of autonomy in the learners (Clay, 1991). They were liberated from adhering to a certain sequence or step in comprehending the book, and they did not feel that there was a need to sound out every single word in the book in order to comprehend it. They had the freedom to switch from visuals to words or to audio (in the case of online picture book) in the process of comprehending the story in the book. In this context, the visuals were not seen as a separate entity from the story in the book, but rather as an element connected to the words and the story in the book. Lewis (2001) termed the relationship as "ecology" where one needs the other in its existence. Pictures and words create an ecological balance, or in the context of the picture book, a union to create better understanding of the story in the book. In addition, literacy learning is not a linear process. There is a need to break from literacy curricula that only allows linear progression to allow multiple entry points to new learning. It has been argued that human beings learn similar things in different ways and that we derive different understandings from objectively similar experiences (Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976).

Research Question 2: How do social and cultural contexts shape emergent second language readers' visual literacy?

The principle that literacy is socially embedded (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) also applies to developing literacy in an additional language (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Kern (2000) defined second language literacy as "the use of socially-, historically-, and

culturally- situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts" (p. 16). In this study, the learners' interpretation of visuals was very much influenced by their social and cultural contexts. The kind of surroundings and background that the learners came from has an impact on how they interpreted the visuals in the picture books. This is because interpreting visuals is not just about what is seen with the eyes but also what is seen by the mind (Bamford, 2003). The influence of social and cultural contexts on emergent second language readers' visual literacy could be observed in several layers:

1.   Cultural background

Visual culture

The two learners in the profile as well as the other four learners in the study were all exposed to visuals from television. Haikal, Shirena**,** and Danial have a higher degree of exposure to visuals from television as compared to the other three learners. This exposure mostly came in the form of their favorite cartoon shows that were shown on television. Haikal, for instance, was constantly referring his interpretation of the visuals in the comic to the characters in the 'Tiny Toon' cartoon show that he loved so much (Haikal, Session 1, Comic, IVW, 14-5-09). Danial, when drawing what he understood as the story in the picture books, preferred to draw what he had seen from cartoon programs on television. Visuals from television also came in other forms of television programs like documentary programs or drama. In the case of Haikal, he related to what he had seen in a documentary program on television to his interpretation of the visuals in '*Flotsam*'. Haikal was able to name the animal "penguin" in the book and stated the location of the 'snow' scene in the book to 'North Pole' because he claimed he had seen all these from a documentary on television (Haikal, Session 2, WPB, 7-5-09).

The learners' visual culture also comprises of their exposure to video games or computer games. This was prevalent among the male learners of this study. Playing computer games seems to be an activity that they found most exciting although only one of the three boys in the study had a computer at home. The other two claimed that they engaged in computer games when they went to their friends' or relatives' homes or when they had relatives coming over with a laptop equipped with game programs. The nature of visuals in these computer games is fast moving. The characters' movements in the video games are usually in high speed with sound effect attached to each movement, for instance the sound of kicking, lashing, falling, punching, flying and many others. These aspects of the visuals have actually influenced the way the young learners in this study read the visuals in the picture books. For instance, in the case of Haikal and Danial, they "read" the visuals in the comic book with such high speed and they also inserted elements of sound of the characters' movement in their "reading" (Chapter 4, pages 115 & 162-163).

2.   Social background

Apart from the kind of visual culture that the learners were exposed to, the degree of exposure the learners have towards visuals as opposed to printed words also affect how they interpret the visuals in the picture books. The degree of exposure to visuals was very much influenced by the social background of the learners. Haikal who was usually left alone to play by himself, spent most of his time watching television or playing with his friends in his neighborhood. He hardly read any books at home; neither had he been exposed to different kinds of printed texts at home (Chapter 4, pp. 142-143). Thus, most

of the information he gained outside school was from what he watched on television or what he played on a computer game and what he observed in his surroundings. In Haikal's case, his level of exposure to visuals was much higher than to printed words. Thus, this was the knowledge that he drew upon when he was trying to comprehend the picture books in the study. Naturally, his focus was very much on the visuals in the book before moving on to the words in the book. As the focus in school was more on words, this was the aspect of literacy that Haikal was evaluated on and because he was not able to excel in a literacy program that focuses on decoding meaning of words, he was not only labeled as being a moderate second language learner, he was also labeled as a "trouble maker" in class. This led to a downward spiral where he found it more and more difficult to learn in a classroom culture that does not acknowledge his strength which was the ability to recall visuals and facts relating to visuals much better that his recall of words. Rogers and Schofield (2005) believe school curricula which focused on a prescribed range of literacy practices are restrictive and that teachers need to acknowledge that literacy is not only learned inside the classroom. They also added that "emphasizing only print texts and 'school' literacies and neglecting the range of artistic expression, popular culture influences, and multimedia savvy that students bring, simply pushes students further toward the margins of the classroom and our society" (Rogers & Schofield, 2005, pp. 208-209).

In this study, Haikal went through twelve one- to-one sessions using four types of picture books. In the sessions, he was allowed to use any source of input in the books to make sense of the book. Haikal capitalized on his exposure to visuals in his effort to

comprehend the words as well as the story in the picture books. In this situation, by providing an environment which supports his strength, he was enabled to use this strength to better understand the words in the book. The ability to merge comprehension of both input (visual and written) not only led to better understanding of the story in the picture books, it also led to better self-esteem which in turn breeds confidence in taking charge of his own learning. His extensive exposure to visuals has been used as a platform for him to jumpstart his development in other skills related to reading and literacy. This was also observed in Shirena as well as Danial. Both learners, through their extensive exposure to visuals in the form of animation or experience (for example going to the zoo or to the beach) were able to use such concrete concepts to better comprehend words which are concepts presented in a more abstract manner (Bruner, 1975).

3.   School and reading context

School context

The learners in this study came from a fairly new school and the school is located in the capital city of the country. All the learners were from Year 1 Bestari and this was the only Year 1 class in the school. The class had 27 pupils, and all 27 were from the Malay ethnic group. Out of these 27 students, 7 had been categorized as not having the basic skills in reading and writing in the first language, Bahasa Melayu, while the other 20 had mixed abilities in reading and writing in the first language. From these 20 mixed ability students, less than 10 students were considered fluent readers in the first language while the others range from "moderate readers" to "slow readers" in the first language.

As for the second language, English, no diagnostic test was ever conducted by the school to determine the students' ability to read and write in English. The English teachers used the grades the students obtained in tests and semester exams to determine their level of English proficiency. Haseena and Hazeeq were categorized as having high-level of proficiency in the language as they obtained above the 90 percentile in their recent English examination conducted by the school, Haikal and Nadiah were in the 60 to 70 percentile, while Shirena and Danial scored in the 50 percentile.

English in the school was taught according to the syllabus prescribed from the national curriculum (KBSR) developed by the Curriculum Development Centre under the Ministry of Education. The teaching of English at this level (Year 1) focuses on a child's literacy development and much of this is attributed to the ability to recognize letter and sound relationships. This is believed to a point leading to the ability to read word, sentence and paragraph. This is clearly dictated in the Curriculum Specification for English (Ministry of Education, 2003) where it is stated that, "…teachers must make pupils aware of the letters and the alphabets and the sounds of these letters so that pupils can string together these sounds and produce a word" (p. 6). This method is later rationalized as bearing great importance in the development of literacy in the English Syllabus for Primary Schools (Ministry of Education, 2001) where it states "the teaching of reading in the early stages begins at word and phrase levels before progressing to sentence recognition and reading at the paragraph level" (p. 6).

This understanding of reading as the ability to sound out words could be seen in Haikal's case as he attempted to read the English words in the picture books used in the sessions. When asked if he could read or know any of the words in the picture books, he would try to 'read' the words by trying to connect the sound of each letter in the word using his understanding of letter and sound relationship in his first language. Naturally, when asked if he knew what the words he had 'read' meant, he did not know. In the second session using the comic, *Fee, Fi, Fo, Fudd*, Haikal attempted to read aloud the word 'spicy' based on his understanding of the sound and letter relationship in his first language. When he was able to read aloud the word 'picture' he was still not able to know what the word means (Chapter 4, pp. 164-165).

Haseena on the other hand, had a better understanding of the sound and letter relationship in English. Thus, she was able to read aloud the words 'fluently'. Haseena did not feel the need to focus on the visuals because she felt by being able to read aloud the words, she was able to comprehend the story in the book. But when asked about the meaning of the words that she had read aloud or the story in the book, she was observed as not being able to comprehend most of the words that she had read aloud. She did not have much understanding of the story in the book as compared to the other learners who were not able to read aloud most of the words in the book as well as her. For example, she was able to read aloud the sentence 'the muffins taste yummy' but when asked for the meaning of the word "yummy", she said "not nice". Only when she was asked to look at the visual that came together with the sentence and with much prompting, she was able to say that the word "yummy" means "it tastes good" (Chapter 4, p. 123) . In Haseena's

case, it reflects how the school culture affects the student's understanding of what reading is. The culture of the school is such that reading is often associated with the ability to read aloud words. Therefore, in reading, Haseena only focused on the words and ignored the other sources of information (in this case, illustrations) which could be of much help not only in reading the book but also comprehending the story in the book.

Reading context

In the case of Haikal, due to his mother's illness and a father who has to work most of the time, Haikal spent most of his time alone. The amount of time he spent with books at home was extremely minimal and the type of books that he engaged with was limited to mostly comics. These comics were mostly in Bahasa Melayu and hardly any in English. Haikal spent much of his time watching television, mostly watching cartoon programs in English as well Bahasa Melayu. Haikal also said that when he went to his relative's house, he would be able to play games on the computer and he really liked this. This was evident during the session using online picture books. Haikal spent a session just exploring my laptop as he found it extremely exciting to be able to move the cursor, to change the page, to click on words and hear the words being read out loud (it was an interactive online story).

As for Shirena, her parents did buy her books but she did not have that many books at home. The ones she had at home were mostly Bahasa Melayu books. Sherina's parents never read English or Bahasa Melayu books to her at home. She usually just

looked at the pictures in the book by herself. At home, Sherina usually spent her time watching television and hardly read any books.

Shirena went to a year of pre-school prior to entering Primary 1. She was not able to recall any books she read or being read to during this year but during the sessions with her she would relate the visuals in the picture books with something that she encountered or experienced during her pre-school year. For instance in the sessions with Shirena using the book *Gorilla*, she related the experience of seeing a gorilla in a zoo during a school trip in her pre-school year with the picture of gorilla in the book.

The learners' reading context was one where they were exposed to more visuals than words. This density of visuals in their reading background had an effect on how they read the picture books in this study. They preferred to focus on visuals first rather than words in their first attempt to read the books as they have more exposure to visuals than printed words. Ultimately, they felt more confident interpreting visuals as compared to words. Visuals later serve as a platform for them to interpret the words and eventually the story in the books.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications

Implications for Research

The understanding that is gained from this study on emergent second language readers' visual literacy shows that a link exists between visual literacy and the traditional

definition of literacy (literacy is the ability to read and write words only). Many studies have shown that children read images differently from words, and reading comprehension does not necessarily start with words (Paivio, 1979; Soundy & Yun, 2006/2007; Wood, 2005). Reading visuals and reading words both require cognitive processing and though they require different cognitive processing, one can help to enhance the other (Paivio, 1979; Sadoski & Paivio, 2001). In short, reading visuals and reading words are not entirely separate entities; through visuals, the children's ability to read words can be enhanced. Instead of just focusing on the words and sound of the words and believing that this is the only route to second language literacy, this study has shown that there is another route to get a child to become literate in the second language and this route might be an easier path to follow for many children out there whom we have come to realize are 'visual learners' due to the visually saturated world they belong to (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Kress, 2003; Lewis, 2001).

Although this study shows there is a link between visual literacy and the teaching of reading in the second language, further research needs to be undertaken to make this link more explicit. Further research that will give practical suggestions on how to incorporate a wider variety of visual texts in the classroom in a meaningful way is needed for teachers to have a clearer idea of how visuals can be used in the classroom to enhance second language reading and writing. As mentioned earlier, further research on this link between visual literacy and traditional literacy needs to be undertaken to show that visual literacy is not a threat to traditional literacy and that by developing the students' visual skills teachers can enhance their reading and writing skills. Only when

using visuals in the teaching of reading and writing is not seen as a waste of time or irrelevant that visuals will have a space in the classroom and the curriculum and hopefully this will give the space for students (and teachers) to explore another path to second language literacy development.

Implications for Curriculum Development

The findings of the study have implications for second language learning especially in developing second language literacy programs. The first is how the findings of the study can be related to the curriculum. The English syllabus for the national primary school is a very comprehensive one. It contains almost all aspects of what children need in their formative years and this in some ways has resulted in the curriculum being interpreted in various ways depending on how one defines literacy. Although this wide scope in the syllabus ensures flexibility on the part of the teachers, it also make one feel overwhelmed with the range of things that one needs to teach the students. As a result, instead of incorporating all that are stated in the curriculum, teachers focus on those aspects that are clearly defined and described in the syllabus (for example, the items to be taught under the sound system and grammar are clearly listed and noted that they must be taught to the students), the ones which they can easily evaluate and later assign marks and form categorization that can easily be reported to the administrators or parents. In this context, focusing on getting the children to recognize and memorize the sound system, grammar items and vocabulary would be easier as compared to analyzing the individual needs of the child and employing different methods as well as assigning different materials for children with different learning styles and

needs. In this context also, literacy, reading in particular, is seen as a sequence of events, where a child will progress from one stage to the other before he or she reaches the ability to read: "The teaching of reading in the early stages begins at the word and phrase levels before progressing to sentence recognition and reading at the paragraph level" (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 6). In reality, the reading process is not as simple as this; reading is a very complex process, a process that requires synchronization of several inputs which are orchestrated by the children themselves in their quest for literacy (Clay, 1998). Most importantly, children who are unable to follow this prescribed sequence of reading are labeled as weak students who are incapable of progressing well in their reading and writing.

Reading is also an activity which involves perception (auditory and visual) and cognition (thinking and problem solving) and these two aspects change markedly between five and seven years of age in all children (Clay, 1991; Paivio, 1979). Visual exploration, visual scanning and visual pick-up of information in print are first-year learning tasks of major importance for the school child often neglected because they are not easy to observe or record (Clay, 1991). Language skills are very important for reading but can only be applied to literacy tasks if the children learn where to direct their attention as they explore with their eyes. Moreover, cognitive growth will not be stimulated as effectively if there is too much early emphasis on language instead of creating a balance between verbal and visual experiences (Paivio, 2006). In addition, it is pertinent for children now to be aware of the kinds of information they can obtain from visuals as we now live in an increasingly visually-dominated culture where visual images

are becoming the predominant form of communication across a range of learning and teaching resources, delivered across a range of media and formats. Thus, there is an urgent need to address the multimodality aspect of literacy and to acknowledge this in the school curricula.

This study has created a space in the curriculum concept of literacy development in which the teaching of reading does not have to start with the sound system or the fundamentals of grammar. It can start with the visuals. In addition, the motivational aspect of visuals is also undeniable and this could be the point for teachers to incorporate visuals in their teaching of reading and writing.

Implications for Practice

Physical space and learning space

The second implication that can be drawn from the study is on the aspect of space. The planned small space that was created between the teacher and student during the sessions allowed a lot of interaction to take place between the teacher and students. In this interaction, the students were assured several times that whatever responses elicited from them, they would not be subjected to marks or grades which later would be made as a basis to rank their English performance. This assurance allows the students to feel free to respond in the way they thought was right as they were no longer constrained to giving the "right" answers. At the same time, they were provided instant feedback to their responses and this helped them to think further on what they have said. In this instance, much of the thinking now has been shifted to the students and with this they felt

a sense of empowerment, a sense of control in their own learning. Having a sense of control in one's learning is important as it not only develops higher self-esteem, it also helps the student to be an independent learner. This is the aspect of literacy that Clay (1991) has been emphasizing. Clay believed that in order to help children learn, we should not attempt to teach them; however we should facilitate them in their attempt to teach themselves by giving immediate feedback and providing them with the conducive environment for learning to occur. She also believed that the aim for most reading and writing programs should be to bring children through the beginning reading program to a stage of independence in reading and writing.

The data from the physical space have shown that it would be difficult for interactions between child and text, teacher and child, text and text/visual and visual, and visual and text to take place if the right physical environment is not provided. Such interactions would not have been possible in a classroom with forty students where there is a vast physical space between the teacher and student. In such a space also, teachers tend to build general theories about how children learn when these children have been exposed to different kinds of learning experiences and instructions prior to entering school. As Clay (1991) pointed out, "children's learning is constrained by our schemes and our scheming, by our allegiances and our theories" (p. 16). As a result of this, individuality is not highly appreciated and, even worse, is considered as a problem and children who do not fit into these "general theories" are considered as not being able to make progress in their reading and writing. This study has shown that the two learners who were considered as slow learners and one learner who was considered as having a

problematic personality were able to progress in their reading. This progress was not only due to the help from the visuals, it was also due to the space given to them to choose which sources of information in the text they wanted to learn first and to capitalize on this knowledge in their effort to make sense of the story in the book.

Recommendations

The data from the study has led to the understanding that the young learners in this study prefer visuals and use visuals in their attempt to comprehend the story in the picture books. In addition, these visuals were not seen as a separate entity from the text as it was observed in the study that the learners used the visuals to better understand the words and eventually the story in the book. Visuals in this context actually filled up any 'comprehension gap' and 'confidence gap' that the young learners have prior to the study. Most importantly, similar to other forms of literacy, the learners' visual literacy must be understood in relation to their social and cultural practices.

This study has shown that visuals play a significant role in developing second language literacy. This was due partly to the fact that our learners now are fed with more visual than written information in their everyday lives. Nevertheless, schools and educators are not acknowledging and using the learners' immense knowledge of visual interpretation in the development of second language literacy. There is an urgent need then to develop a test to diagnose needs and to help the visually literate learners in their acquisition of second language literacy.

Development of visual literacy test as a byproduct of the study

At the end of this study, a visual literacy test (*see Appendix I*) was developed to see which input (visual or written or both) had a more significant impact on the learners' understanding of words, sentences and story. The test reveals that learners were able to have a better recall of words and story if they were presented to them in visual form as compared to word form. Nevertheless if the visuals were paired with words and sentences, the learners had a better understanding of the words and story as compared to only having them in visual form.

Results from the test lend further weight to the findings of the study reported in Chapter 4 in which visuals are always the first source of information in the learners' effort to comprehend words or stories. In addition, the existence of both visuals and words help the learners to better comprehend the words because the words are now attached to the image of the visuals and the visuals serve as a platform for the learners to move to interpreting the meaning of the words and the story in the books. As such it makes good sense for teachers of young learners to use the test to have a better understanding of the methods that the learners employ to internalize and to perform in the language. Brown (2001) states that learners draw on various strategies for sending and receiving language and that one's strategies for success may differ markedly from another's.

The data from the twelve one-to-one sessions with each of the six young learners show that visuals are a powerful source of information in second language reading.

Visuals act as a platform in comprehending words in the second language and most importantly, they gave the young learners a sense of confidence and independence in their process of becoming literate in the second language. In this context, visuals may be the key in developing effective or alternative second language literacy programs in schools. The attention that children pay to pictures and text and the relationship that they construct between picture and texts have been shown to help in children's literacy development (Clay, 1991; Hudelson, 1994). The study has also shown that early literacy programs that focus on the students and start from what they know will have better potential in reaching to students with various types of reading background and levels of exposure to reading texts. As children are different from one another, they see and understand things differently; inevitably their experience to early literacy may also differ and acknowledging these differences is the key to a better second language literacy program. Thus, the visual literacy test developed from this study is deemed to be appropriate in evaluating learners' cognitive styles (visual learners or textual learners) and may be used in developing a more effective approach in teaching second language literacy.

Limitations

The study bears several limitations and they will be discussed in terms of the challenges that occurred during data collection and the selection of participants, sites and picture books for the study.

Challenges During Data Collection

Firstly, time was a great challenge during the data collection period. Although the schedule of the 12 sessions for each participant was developed prior to the data collection period, there were always changes to the schedule during the period of data collection itself. The participants sometimes were absent from school and were unable to come to the scheduled session. In the period of data collection, the H1N1 scare swept the country and school children were not encouraged to come to school if they had any fever or flu-like symptoms. During this time also, many healthy students did not attend schools because their parents were worried they might be infected by the virus. Thus, the sessions conducted during this period were affected as many of the participants did not come to school and the allocated time for the sessions had to be rescheduled.

Secondly, the participants of the study consisted of six young learners. From these six young learners, three were boys and the other three were girls. The six learners were all from the same class and school. They also came from the same ethnic background. As context is an important aspect in qualitative research, if the participants had come from different classes, schools and different ethnic backgrounds, it would have provided the study with varying levels of context and could have added to the richness of the data.

Thirdly, in the study, six participants were selected from one site. The site was selected because the main gatekeeper to the site (the headmistress of the school) provided easy access to the six participants in the study. The school also had the physical space for the research to be conducted as the school was a big school with small number of

students. Nevertheless, if more than one site were selected for the study, it would have allowed the data from one site to be compared with other sites and this probably could have led to a more in-depth understanding on the role of visuals in second language literacy.

Lastly, the study used four types of picture books; printed picture book, wordless picture book, comics, and online picture book. For each type, only one book was selected to be used in three sessions. As there is much variation in terms of visuals and book layout for each of the mentioned types of picture books, the data would have been more exhaustive if more than one book was used for each type of picture book. In addition, if more types of picture books with various modes of presentations were used in the study, it would have made the data richer and allowed deeper understanding of how young learners use visuals in various forms in acquiring second language literacy.

Conclusions

The understanding that is gained from this study on emergent second language readers' visual literacy shows that there is a link between visual literacy and the traditional definition of literacy. Paivio's (2006, 1979) work on theory of dual coding explained to educators how young children use two different approaches (verbal and visual) simultaneously to help understand their existing world. Reading visuals and reading words both require cognitive processing and though they require different cognitive processing, one can help to enhance the other. In short, reading visuals and

reading words are not entirely a separate entity; through visuals, the children's ability to read words can be enhanced.

The two profiles developed from data of the study have also shown that contexts play an important role in a child's learning of the second language. Contexts include the social and cultural surrounding of the child's home as well as school; the reading background of the child; and the personal interest of the child. Since literacy is very much embedded in these contexts, any changes in these aspects will continuously affect and change literacy practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2001). Providing a context that will stimulate the child's background knowledge and enhance the child's strength will encourage much learning to take place (Bruner, 1975). The space given for the child to explore new knowledge using what is known and what is familiar fosters a sense of confidence and independence that becomes the key ingredient in successful second language learning.