

**'It's Got Exactly the Same Chook Running in the Wood':
Children's Sense of Intertextual Boundaries in the Early School Years**

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Abstract

Framed by theories of intertextuality that contend no text is an island unto itself (Bakhtin, 1981; Barthes, 1988; Chandler, 2003; Kristeva, 1984), this paper presents research that, crossing boundaries between texts and children, examined children's sense of intertextuality in the early school years. A cohort of 15 children was tracked across the first three years of their formal schooling. The children engaged in interviews that began by exploring books that children did and did not enjoy, to gauge the kinds of texts with which children engaged and to prime the pump for talking more about these texts. Subsequently, the interviews focused on relationships that children perceived between texts. Children were also observed as they engaged in interactions with their teachers and peers around texts in their classrooms. This paper explores findings in terms of the ways in which children construed relationships and boundaries amongst texts, as well as shifts in children's intertextual thinking as they progressed in their early school years. Implications for understanding reader functioning and comprehension are discussed, as are implications for classroom literacy pedagogies and practices.

Introduction

Unfolding in streams of consciousness or lurking beneath the surface of explicit awareness, fragments of other texts and lived experiences cross a reader's path and intersect with the text in the reader's hand or mind – such is the nature of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1984). In this intersection, boundaries of texts are stretched to create spaces where meaning gathers. In that intersection, the two key questions guiding this paper's explorations are: How do children make sense of relationships among myriad texts in their lives and what, if any, are the shifts that occur in children's intertextual thinking across their first three years of school? What are the implications for how we understand children function as readers, and for classroom literacy pedagogies and practices in the initial school years?

Conceptual Framework and Related Research

According to intertextuality theory, every text is seen to connect in some way or other with other texts. Kristeva, who coined the term intertextuality, wrote that 'Any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.' (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). Using a similar metaphor, Barthes described text as 'a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations.' (Barthes, 1977, p. 146)

While the term intertextuality has been applied generally in this way, it has also been used to refer to a particular kind of way in which texts draw on other texts, through explicit or implicit allusions to one another. Genette (1992, 1997, 1998) devised 'transtextuality' as an umbrella term encompassing several ways in which texts interrelate:

- Paratextuality, referring to interplay between the text-in-hand and its surrounding features, such as between main text and book cover, title page, endpapers, font, media, book blurbs.
- Intertextuality, referring to interplay between the text-in-hand and other texts, through such means as quotes, allusions, pastiche and implicit integration of other sources.
- Architextuality, referring to interplay between the text-in-hand and broader bodies of texts, such as between text-in-hand and genre, series and/or corpus with which it might and might not be associated.
- Hypotextuality, referring to interplay between the text-in-hand and other texts/genres that it transforms through means such as adaptation, parody, retelling, sequel, prequel, translation.

Another category to be added to this list is intratextuality, referring to interplay inside the text-in-hand among its elements, such as between words and pictures in a text (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992).

In consequence of the intertextual (in its broad sense) nature of texts, multiple meanings arise from a text-in-hand – and that is before one considers what a reader brings to the text in terms of their cultural context and intertextual history. In describing texts as ‘tissue[s] of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of cultures’, Barthes (1988, p. 170) asserted that it was for the reader to achieve unity of meaning. Kristeva (1980) portrayed texts as comprising two axes that intersect at right angles to each other: one axis connects author and reader of a text, and the other axis, perpendicular to the first, connects texts with other texts. In this view, meaning resides and is to be constructed at the intersection of these axes.

A reader’s interaction, then, is not just with the text-in-hand but with a range of other texts that converge on the text and include the reader’s own experiences and prior knowledge (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). Moreover, as Nikolajeva & Scott (2001, p.228) note, ‘Intertextuality may be culturally dependent...an allusion only makes sense if the reader is familiar with the hypotext [the text that is the point of reference].’ Thus reading is seen to be a lateral and recursive process that sees readers range across vast networks of texts they have experienced to create meaning from the text at hand. One of the tasks for readers when reading a particular text is to achieve some sense of coherent meaning from these networks – a complex task as these networks continue to change over the course of readers’ lives as they encounter new texts and experiences.

Applied to young children in the early school years, research has revealed the importance of making connections to children’s cultural resources and funds of knowledge to children’s learning (Kaser & Short, 1998); ways in which children connect texts which nurture their understandings about texts and their engagement with texts as meaning-makers (Roache-Jamieson, 2005); contribution of making connections to fostering literate communities in classrooms (Cairney, 1990, 1992); and the capacity for children to sustain and elaborate on these connections when given open-ended protocols for participating in class interactions around texts (Oyler & Barry, 1996).

Comprehension studies have corroborated the importance of making connections between the text-in-hand and other texts and experiences. Hartman’s landmark study (1995), for example, portrays effective reading in terms of linking the text-in-hand to other texts and highlights the importance of assessing comprehension in terms of both the text-in-hand and the connections to other texts and experiences that readers make.

How, then, young readers might be assisted in finding their own intertextual path through a text is a key consideration in class reading and literacy programs, and has been investigated as such. For example, Pantaleo (2004, 2005) has documented the kinds of intertextual connections that children make when engaging with texts in group settings, in terms of links among texts, links

inside texts, and links to personal experiences. Sipe's classroom-based research (1993, 2000, 2001) has documented young children in early grade classrooms making connections in ways that nurture their understandings about texts and their engagement with texts as meaning-makers. Crawford and Hade's study (2000) of young readers likewise revealed the importance of connections children make in their transactions with texts; and highlighted that children are not always aware of why they make the connections they do.

This lack of awareness can present significant challenges to teachers' understanding and uptake of what children say in their class interactions around texts (Harris & Trezise, 1999; Harris, Trezise & Winser, 2002). Elusiveness is part and parcel of intertextuality that may be understood from a psychoanalytic perspective (Kristeva, 1984). Intertextuality may happen consciously and not so consciously. At times, intertextuality can be lucid and clear for readers: they are aware of the light that other texts shed on the text-in-hand and can articulate these connections and their relevance to their interpretations of the text. At other times, connections can be puzzling and elusive: while readers may be vaguely aware that some connection is there, like a distant bell ringing, they cannot pin the connection down.

In class interactions around texts, this elusive quality of intertextuality has important implications. Children may express connections that suddenly spring to mind and do so in cryptic terms that are difficult to understand (Harris, Trezise & Winser, 2002). Kristeva (1984) refers to these kinds of utterances as instances of 'condensation' – they represent larger units of meaning that have not surfaced to a fully conscious level but are deeply embedded in the individual's experiences.

Building on the body of intertextuality research that has been done in early grade classrooms, this current study shifted the focus from classroom interactions. It did so by creating open-ended conversational spaces with children to explore what connections might arise from children's initiatives, as well any shifts that might or might not occur in children's intertextual thinking over their first three years of school. The significance of this work, small scale as it is in this initial instance, lies in seeking to understand what children of their own accord in relatively unstructured, one-to-one interactions, might initiate; and how this might evolve over time.

Research Design

The study was guided by two key research questions:

- How do children make sense of relationships among texts and what, if any, are the shifts that occur in children's intertextual thinking across their first three years of school?
- What are the implications for how we understand children function as readers, and for classroom literacy pedagogies and practices in the initial school years?

This small-scale study deployed interviews for examining the kinds of intertextual connections children initiate. Interviews began with a cohort of 20 children in their first year of school (Kindergarten), at a school situated in a socio-culturally diverse community. These children were tracked from Kindergarten to Year One (with attrition and one child absent, numbers dropped to 15 children) and Year Two (when the child who was absent the previous year was available for the interview, with numbers totalling 16). These children were chosen on the basis of their willingness and comfort to participate; the informed consent of children's parents or caregivers for their children to participate.

The interviews were semi-structured (Glesne, 2006; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), to provide balance between flexibility within each interview and comparability of data cross interviews. To create a comfort zone and provide some concrete material on which to develop and sustain these conversations with each child, a collection of texts from the child's classroom were brought to the table; and each child was invited to do the same from the classroom, home or other places. The researcher showed and talked about the texts she had brought, and invited the child to share and talk about the texts s/he had brought to the table. The conversation then turned to asking the child to talk about what if anything s/he liked about the texts on the table. This initial conversation was followed by asking the child to talk about what, if anything, the child did not like about these texts. These two questions allowed the researcher to explore how children describe texts; and whether or not children identify attributes that texts share that makes these texts something children like or don't like. Finally, the child was asked to comment on anything that the texts in hand reminded, which more explicitly invited children to make connections to other texts.

The interview did not in the first instance focus on intertextuality. Rather, the conversations were constructed to engage children in talking about texts they enjoy and those they don't. What the texts were specifically was not of concern here – rather, the research interest was with what intertextual connections arose as we chatted about texts.

This interview protocol did not mirror classroom interactions typically found in the intertextuality research reviewed in this paper; the conversations were conducted on a one-to-one basis rather than small groups or whole class; and the interviews were repeated across the children's first three years of school, allowing for shifts in children's intertextual thinking to be explored.

The interview data were analysed by using open coding processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify and categorise emergent themes that related to the kinds of intertextual connections children expressed. The unit of analysis was the conversational turn, defined by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975, p. 231) as 'everything said by one speaker before another began to speak.' However, if the interviewer needed to clarify or ask the child to extend a connection that the child had begun, this was taken as part of the same turn.

The conversational turns that contained intertextual connections were counted, and percentages for each intertextual category calculated in terms of the total turns. Counts were also done within each intertextual category, and percentages calculated for each year (Kindergarten, Year One and Year Two). Trustworthiness of the data was ensured through audiotaping and transcribing each interview; and cross-checking data analysis.

Findings

The Findings below are presented first in terms of the intertextual themes that emerged. This account is followed by a Discussion on implications of the study for how we understand reader functioning.

Emergent categories of intertextual connections

In total, 107 conversational turns appeared in the interview data across the three years in which children identified intertextual connections. The intertextual categories that emerged from these 107 turns are overviewed in Table 1. Percentages for each category were calculated as total instances in each category

Table 1. Overview of emergent intertextual themes across the three years

Category	Kindergarten	Year One	Year Two
Grouping texts into informal or formal categories n = 28 – 26%*	4 – 14%**	9 – 32%	15 – 54%
Connecting with how a text is presented n = 25 – 23%	7 – 28%	6 – 24%	12 – 48%
Linking texts to personal experiences n = 17 – 16%	7 – 41%	6 – 35%	4 – 24%
Linking texts in terms of common details of which children are explicitly aware n = 12 – 11%	2 – 17%	4 – 33%	6 – 50%
Linking texts in a series n = 7 – 7%	1 – 14%	2 – 29%	4 – 57%
Sensing similarity or familiarity without knowing or being able to say why n = 5 – 5%	0 – 0%	1 – 20%	4 – 80%
Linking texts to personal learning and self as reader n = 8 – 7%	5 – 63%	2 – 25%	1 – 12%
Linking texts that are different versions of the same tale n = 2 – 2%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	2 – 2%
Getting intertextual wires crossed n = 2 – 2%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	2 – 100%

*Percentages for each category calculated as total instances in each category divided by total conversational turns (107) across all data.

**Percentages for each year and category calculated as instances in each year divided by total instances in each category.

divided by the total number of conversational turns (107). For each category and its corresponding school year, the percentage that the category represented in that year is calculated as the number of instances of the category that year divided by total instances in that category. In what follows, a more descriptive account of children’s intertextuality is provided for each category.

Grouping texts into informal or formal categories.

This category was the most frequently occurring category in the data, with a distinct increase in frequency with each passing year. For example:

Charlie, Kindergarten – *“They’re funny, they’re gross, they’re scary.”*

Lisa, Kindergarten – *‘I like these books because these flower books have got good stories in them.’*

Lisa, Year 1 – *‘It’s an exciting adventure book.’*

Jamie, Year 1 – *‘Well, they’re really good story books, because they have comedy. They’re funny.’*

Michelle, Year 2 – *‘I like “Piccolo Pepperone’s Perfect Pizzas because it’s a fairy tale and it’s funny.’*

Alice, Year 2 – *‘Jemima Puddle-Ducks, they don’t have this sort of brand.’*

Alice, Year 2 – *‘If it’s kind of sad, then it’s not, it could be a nice sad story or it could just be a happy fairy tale or it could be something that just goes sad.’*

Tania in Kindergarten, when talking about texts she like, noted similarities in terms of them all being texts that *‘teach you things’*, doing so in terms of recollecting specific details that characterised these texts this way:

‘Well, in the “Fox and the Little Red Hen”, what I like about it because the fox is always sneaky but sometimes his tricks don’t work. And in the book of “Animals and their Babies”, it’s good because it shows you how they look after you and it gives you more information about the babies and animals. In “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”, it tells you never to lie because then people won’t believe you if you keep lying. And in “A Rainy Day” it tells you that you need an umbrella or something to go out in the rain. And if you read it to yourself, “The Sly Fox and the Little red Hen”, it tells you how the Red Hen got to learn her sense.’

It is revealing to track individual children on this trend. For example, when Edward was in Kindergarten, he spoke of texts that he enjoyed in terms of specific aspects of their content:

‘Well, I like “Dorothy the Dinosaur” because, um, Dorothy comes into their garden, then the boy tells Dorothy to go. Well, she asks him, “Who are you?” and all that, and then Dorothy starts to cry but puts her hand in her mouth like that [gestures] and then Dorothy falls asleep in the garage. She might think she’s in trouble.’

In Year One, when again reporting on texts he liked, Edward spoke in similarly specific content-based terms, but started to draw out broader links to his own life experiences:

‘Well, the reason I like this one is because it’s about this man and I think he owns a farm and he has a magpie with him and in the end, he has a whole house of pumpkins, a house made out of pumpkins. Well, it was good for the farms [referring to class theme on farms] that we did last term. And I especially like mashed pumpkins, and it was about pumpkins, so it was all, like it was delicious to me.’

By Year Two, Edward was identifying categorical relations among texts in terms of the kinds of books that were an enjoyable part of his intertextual history:

‘Well some of [the books I like] are information books and they’re good because they tell you things, different things that you just probably didn’t know. Other ones are just

good books that make up stories, so I like them because they're just fun to read and that's all.'

Edward's classmate Julie, when interviewed in Year Two, also drew categorical distinctions between texts in her intertextual history:

'I like fiction and non-fiction, but sometimes I like fiction better because you just expect surprises, you can expect whatever happens, and it might rain chocolate, you can just imagine it. They're exciting and I love to read a lot.'

A year before, in Year One, Julie had articulated foundations of these kinds of categorical understandings about texts, intersplicing her recollected details of texts with categorical comments like *'It's a fun story'*, *'It's like a mystery book'*, and *'I like that because it's pretty crazy, funny and pretty good, like surprising. When you turn the page, you go "Wow!", like that [turning the page and showing her surprise].'*

Here we see instances of shifts in children's intertextual thinking towards more abstract and generalised ways of connecting texts, related to Genette's architextuality previously cited in this paper. It is likely that this distinct shift was not co-incidentally accompanied by instructional emphases in the children's classrooms, as per Syllabus guidelines (*NSW English K-6 Syllabus, 1998*), for as Jamie in Year 2 noted:

J: Some are very funny and some are about adventures. Some might be factual texts.

P: What are factual texts?

J: Books that tell you facts that are true. Our teacher told us.'

Connecting with how a text is presented.

This category, related to Genette's category of paratextuality previously cited, was the second most frequently occurring category in the data, with a distinct increase in frequency in Year Two. Paratextual features emerged as salient aspects of what children do and don't like about the texts they encounter. For example:

Lachlan, Kindergarten – *'I like reading them ... the thing I like about them is the way that it pinches the pictures. Like this book where it started off. [Looking through the book] Where is it? [Finds it] Yeah, where it says, "Who's got my big toe", it gets bigger and bigger and bigger. So you like the way they make the words get small and then bigger and bigger and back to smaller and smaller... 'Cause it's getting louder and louder, then when he's walking away, he's gone further and you can't hear him very much, and [citing text in a whisper] "I've got my big toe", quieter and quieter.'*

Julie, Kindergarten – *'There's only one thing I really don't like and that is that it [the book] takes a bit too long.'*

Darren, Year 2 – *'What I don't like about these books are the pictures. Like the cover doesn't got real good pictures and the writing doesn't tell you much. I don't like the boring*

books that aren't interesting and don't have good pictures and don't tell you about much and don't tell you much.'

Lisa, Year 2 – *'They're nice stories and I like their pictures and how they're, um, not illustrate, I forgot the word. How they write the story.'*

In making these connections, it is apparent that children have appropriated paratextual language such as picture, title, page and so on cover, mixing this language with more informal talk. As well, the children showed awareness of how texts are designed and their impact for the reader and viewer.

Linking texts to personal experiences.

This category was the third most frequently occurring category in the data. Interestingly, its appearance decreased with each passing year. For example:

Matthew, Kindergarten – *'I always hide this book. Once I got robbed and I hide this right in our attic. He didn't go up to my, to our attic. There was all snakes and spiders.'*

Stuart, Year 1 – *"Creepy Crawlies" reminds me of the book when I was smaller and my dad read a book like Creepy, about being Creepy animals.'*

Edward, Year 1 – *'Well, it was really good for [our class theme on] farms that we did last term.'*

In Year One, Tania made links to personal experiences that saw an intricate stream of intertextual consciousness unfold:

'Sometimes my Mum and Dad make me read a whole book, they [the book] got a spine, like, and it's really thick, and sometimes my Mum gets me out this big book, it's about that big, and it's got all these things in them, and I look at them and read them. It helps me learn more things. It says how big is one of these snakes, it's a lot, but I forget. I can't bring in it 'cause it's not mine, it's my Uncle Zell's, he's dead now, but it's really old.'

Comments like this in the interview data reflect the intricate ways in which intertextuality unfolds in young children's minds. Children were given space in these interviews to do so freely – implications for class interactions are taken up in the Discussion that follows these Findings.

Linking texts in terms of common details of which children are explicitly aware.

This category comprised 11% of total instances of conversational turns in which intertextual connections were expressed by children. There was a distinct increase in frequency with each passing year, going from 17% in Kindergarten to 50% in Year Two.

As children spoke about texts they read, they reconstructed snippets of details from works of fiction and non-fiction that they had read:

Matthew, Kindergarten – *"The Hungry Giant, well, I have a giant book at home. It's not "The Hungry Giant". Um, it [the giant] climbed up this tree. A man cut it down. [jack and the*

beanstalk] The tree fell on the man and it fell on the fence, smack to the ground. [Referring to "The Hungry Giant"] He eats all this stuff, he east his house! [laughing]

Jamie Year 1 – *"Tony's Bread" reminds me of Hansel and Gretel because they drop the bread, they make a trail out of it.'*

Cathy Year 2 – *'This one ["The Princess and the Pea"] reminds me of "Little Red Riding Hood". 'Cause that has a wolf in it and that one [pointing to tiger in "The Princess and the Pea" looks like a wolf. "Sly Fox and Little Red Hen" reminds me of "The Little Red Hen". I remember I've seen a fox in "The Little Red Hen".'*

These comments typified the interview data in this category, in which children's fragments of recollection and snippets of details were quite specific and anchored in the context of the text being recalled – often requiring the recalled texts to be known for the children's comments to be fully understood, for example:

Alice Year 1 – *'This one reminds me of the postman book that we read today...there was, you know, the tin soldier. They grabbed his leg, and the ballerina, and they lived happily ever after.'*

Therein lies a key challenge for teachers unpacking children's ideas when they interact with children around texts, taken up in this paper's Discussion that follows.

Linking texts in a series.

This category occurred infrequently in the data. While there is a marked increase in frequency with each passing year, from 14% in Kindergarten to 57% in year Two, numbers are quite small to be indicative. Examples include:

Charlie, Kindergarten – *"The Meanies"... that it's Meanies but they're not the same, it's um, the meanies Holiday Trip.'*

Matthew, Year 1 – *'It's the second version, and Strega Nona did it in the third book.'*

Tania, Year 2 – *"The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck" makes me remember all the Peter Rabbit stories.'*

Lachlan in Year Two recognised books that were not part of a series, noting *'I think these books are one of their own kind.'*

These comments all relate to series as a sub-category of Genette's architextuality, previously cited – and indicates an emerging awareness of how texts may fall into explicit networks of texts that is more abstract than linking specific details or particular texts.

Linking texts to personal learning and self as reader.

This category also occurred infrequently in the data. While again numbers in this category are small, it is interesting to note the decrease in its occurrence from 63% in Kindergarten to 12%

in Year Two. What children actually said in this category is also of interest in terms of how they construed their learning and reading vis-à-vis the texts they shared:

Tania, Kindergarten – *‘What I don’t like about reading books at school that are real hard, like for Year Four. I don’t like reading them books ‘cause they’re too hard and too hard to figure out. I don’t like hard ones with lots of thick pages.’*

Lachlan, Kindergarten – *‘Well the good thing I like about these books is I learn a lot of words out of books and the way I used to do it, I used to break them up into words. /Ee/ got like that and it said /ee/. When I was going, the first time I read this I went, I knew that word, I went ‘The jig/a/r/ee/*

In Year 1, Lachlan’s reflections on how texts impacted his reading continued:

Lachlan, Year 1 – *‘Like if there’s just writing on a page and you don’t understand it, you can’t, there’s no picture to look at it. So you can’t understand it much when you’re in there. So you just gotta keep reading on and on, and it’s just like a bit annoying.’*

Julie’s comment in Year Two also indicates a metacognitive awareness of her reading vis-à-vis the particular texts she reads – and the elusiveness she expresses here resonates with the elusive nature of intertextuality itself:

Julie, Year 2 – *‘Some of them are far too easy but that’s okay. I don’t mind which books I read. I notice some books have hard words in them. But some have hard words that I’ve read before but I can’t understand it... When I read them, I can read it in my mind like that. But when I try to say it out, I can’t really do it. It’s sort of hard to explain. But when you know what it is, it’s till really hard... Like if I was reading Pharoah, if I was reading about Egypt, and I find some hard words, I would say them. I could say them in my mind really easily but when it comes to saying them out loud, it’s sort of really hard.’*

Sensing similarity or familiarity without knowing or being able to say why.

Not an intertextual connection itself, this category has been identified as it reflects a small trend in the data whose significance is amplified by what we understand in the literature as condensation and the elusive nature of intertextuality. This was found to be a significant finding in classroom-based intertextuality research (Harris, Trezise & Winser, 2002) as well as interview research (Crawford & Hade, 2000), and hence is included here to explore what the children said on these occasions.

This category illustrates that making connections across texts is not always clear-cut. On many occasions, the proverbial bell might ring, but can only be identified with some prompting or provocation. For example, Lachlan in Year One explained that *“Fraidy Cat”* reminds me sometimes of *‘Three Little Pigs’*, and stopped, a little puzzled. I prompted him, *‘Something about it is similar, is it?’* Lachlan replied, *‘Cause there’s something familiar, ‘cause, ‘cause they’re running around the*

room scared like, you know, the three little pigs do.' Other children showed a similar struggle with elusive associations. For example:

- *'It reminds me of "Henny Penny" for some reason. I haven't read it but just the title reminds me of "Henny Penny" for some reason.'* (Edward, Year Two)
- *'I've seen that one myself but it was a different book [that is, version]. I've seen that before but it was a different book' When asked, 'Do you remember that book, he replied, 'No, hardly'* (Jamie, Year Two)
- *'I know "Hattie and the Fox" reminds me of something but I can't exactly think what.'* (Julie, Year Two)

Language like *'there's something familiar'*, *'for some reason'*, *'reminds me'*, *'I've seen that before'*, and *'I can't exactly think what'* shows self-awareness of what these young children simultaneously know and don't know, even if they cannot name it.

Getting intertextual wires crossed.

Again, a very small category but one that has been identified here and flagged for further investigation – as it pertains to findings of earlier research that indicates challenges for children keeping track of the various intertextual threads that may unravel in a sequence of class interactions around texts (Harris, Trezise & Winser, 2002).

An example of crossed intertextual wires emerged in the interview data when Tania in Year two drew connections between texts that involve foxes and hens and cumulative story patterns:

T: 'The Fox and the Little Red Hen' makes me remember 'The Little Red Hen' and 'Hattie and the Fox' and 'The Boy who Cried Wolf' makes me remember of, um, I can't remember.'

P: If you don't remember the name of that book, do you remember what it was about?

T: Yes, it's about um, yeah, like 'The House that Jack Built', except that he tells a lie, that one.'

As Tania continued, she blurred details of 'Rosie's Walk' with other fox and hen stories. While the former text shows the fox to be inept, other texts show the fox clever and quite able to catch the hen, the object of his pursuit. Yet Tania got her wires crossed between these texts:

'In "Rosie's Walk", it's about a little hen and there's a fox that comes after her but Rosie doesn't know and so the fox jumps up into a tree [which doesn't happen in 'Rosie's Walk'] and then underneath, the little hen is waking by, I mean Rosie's walking by [here Tania's self-correction signals her awareness that she is blurring boundaries between texts], and he jumps down on Rosie [which doesn't happen in this story] and so that tells you how clever the fox is.'

Clearly, crossed wires like these have implications for reader comprehension – more specifically, how we as teachers understand what it is young readers comprehend. On the surface

of these comments, we could say that the children have got texts confused and have poor recall of their content. Probing more deeply, however, we could also see that children are functioning intertextually and that such functioning has led to their responses.

Linking texts that are different versions of the same tale.

Only two instances of this category emerged in the interview data, related to Genette's hypotextuality previously cited:

Alice, Year 2 – *'Well, there's different sorts of covers of "Pinochio" and all that, 'cause there's one in our room and it's not like this. And I've got one at home.'*

Edward, Year 2 – *"Pinochio" does remind me of the other "Pinochio" stories. And, oh yeah, "The Princess and the Pea", I've heard a lot of different ones about them. "The Boy Who Cried Wolf", I've heard other ones of that as well, and that's all.'*

Discussion

This paper set out to explore how children in open-ended, one-to-one conversations make sense of relationships across texts in their lives and what, if any, shifts occur in children's intertextual thinking across their first three years of school. Categories that emerged reflect a range of ways that these children intertextually think, and indicate some distinct shifts in this thinking across their initial school years. Some important implications for how we understand children function as readers and for classroom literacy pedagogies and practices in the initial school years arise.

In regard to the distinct increase that occurred in children's grouping of texts over the years, it appears from the data that children's reconstructions of snippets of detailed and fragments of recollections built a data base for discerning relations of similarity and difference among texts – a shift accompanied, no doubt co-incidentally, by shifts in instructional emphases in their classrooms, as talk about text types or genres became more formal and entrenched in class interactions around texts, commensurate with the NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* (NSW DET, 1998) guiding this work. Indeed, data not included here – that is, the comments children made about specific texts that were not intertextual provided an important data base too, from which children could draw specific connections that became more abstract and general across the years.

This finding resonates with findings of classroom-based intertextuality studies that show children's need often to journey from the specific to the general, the concrete to the abstract, when engaged in instructional experience about abstract concepts such as text genres. The ways in which children came to group texts resonated with how texts are classified in the NSW *English K-6 Syllabus*, which was guiding these children's classroom instruction. This alignment highlights the cultural nature of intertextuality – that how we construct connection among texts is shaped by the resources we bring to the texts that are shaped by the contexts we habituate.

In many instances, and with encouragement, children took up considerable space in the interview interactions to explore and express their intertextual thinking. Some of these sustained stretches have been shared in this paper – space considerations have prevented more being included. These stretches indicate the importance of children being given space to explore and express their thinking. Comments like Tania's 'Uncle Zell' comment reflect the intricate ways in which intertextuality unfolds in young children's minds. In class interactions, giving space for children this way is not always possible or deemed relevant – and sometimes children's lines of thinking, germane to their engagement with text, may need to give way to the instructional agenda at hand (Harris, Trezise & Winser, 2002).

The elusive nature of intertextuality emerged in this data, *albeit* not frequently. In light of previous research studies (Crawford & Hade, 2000; Harris & Trezise, 1999), they were important to include here. Intertextual connections cannot always be elicited by asking questions or explicitly seeking associations to be identified – such as teachers might try to do in class interactions around texts, to build bridges to new learning. Intertextuality, an important part of how we function as readers, is not always about naming particular links to other entities – and naming does not always mean knowing what an association is.

Children's fragments of recollection and snippets of details comprised a substantial slice of the interview data. These comments were quite specific and anchored in the context of the text being recalled – requiring the recalled texts to be known for the children's comments to be fully understood. Therein lies a key challenge for teachers when they interact with children around texts, in terms of how this kind of specific and contextualised talk is used as a springboard for developing more abstract and generalised ways of thinking and talking about texts. As documented elsewhere, struggles can and do arise between teacher's instructional focus on general ideas about texts to do text genre work, for example, and children's attention to specific details and recollected fragments such as documented here (Harris, Trezise & Winser, 2002). These interview data corroborate children's dispositions towards specific ways of talking about texts – but also, as importantly, documents their journey to more taxonomic ways that are founded in the highly specific and contextualised and sometimes inscrutable fragments they recall.

Implications for further research include indepth investigation of how children on their own, with peers and with their teachers construct and follow intertextual threads in their own thinking and their text-based interactions with one another (in view of the multiple ways children make connections and the instances of crossed intertextual wires and elusive connections that arose in these data).

Edward in Year One was looking at the front cover of a book when suddenly he said, '*Basil*.' Try as we might, Edward could not clarify what he meant. Such is the elusive nature of intertextuality as we move on. In the quest to continue this line of intertextuality inquiry with young children, how to work with the elusive nature of intertextuality remains an important question for

further research – particularly when children themselves are not always aware of why they sense connections that spring to their mind.

Finally, this study relied on verbal language to explore children's intertextuality. Future research would do well to examine how multi-modal ways of exploring intertextuality with children can support children's intertextual functioning, particularly in light of some of the challenges highlighted in this paper, and boundary riding with the likes of 'Basil' from whence he comes and 'Uncle Zell' to see where he might lead.

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