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UWP 001 006

22 October 2021

Rhetorical Analysis of “Interpreting the Images in a Picture Book: Students Make Connections to Themselves, Their Lives and Experiences” by Jessica Mantei and Lisa Kervin

Background

Jessica Mantei’s and Lisa Kervin’s article, “Interpreting the Images in a Picture Book: Students Make Connections to Themselves, Their Lives and Experiences” dives into the idea that illustrations in a book tend to trigger memories of previous experiences that a student has lived through. “[These books] offer, among other things, opportunities for making connections to personal experiences and to the values and beliefs of families and communities” (page 76). Not only do the connections made by the students help the students get to know themselves, but it is also a way for the teacher to get a look into their students’ lives. In previous investigations of this matter, observations have been made discovering that, “...reading a wordless picture book requires active participation involving risk-taking, intertextual and cultural understanding and ‘ability of sense of’ the story using images alone. In making meaning from wordless picture books, then, the reader may require extended time for engagement, reading and reflection along with opportunities to respond through a range of modes” This idea that you do not need to read books with millions of words to make connections is different compared to what we know about how people make connections through reading. A specific image needs to have a meaning behind it in order to form some sort of meaningful connection to it.

Audience

The target audience for this piece is most likely educators and could even be researchers that are working with kids. In the text, the authors mention how having the insight to the children's funds of knowledge can "inform literacy pedagogy" (page 76) which is the practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept. Educators get a closer look at the different perspectives that students have from their at home experiences, or even perspectives from different cultures than their own. It is important to take into consideration the different ideas and questions that the students have to offer on a subject. These are new ways to learn about new topics. Researchers can use this article to learn about the ways that children react when they see an image and to see in what ways the children decide to look at an image. To see what the first perspective that they see is.

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to conduct an experiment that compares how students (all aged 9-10) from three different schools react to the same picture book, '*Mirror*', by Jeannie Baker. School 1 is located in a suburban area and has a growing refugee population, there are four girls and two boys (all who had moved to Australia within the last four years before this research assignment). School 2 is located in a suburban area with a multicultural status, there are four boys and two girls (all who are bilingual and Indigenous, Lebanese, Macedonian, and Serbian, all were also born in Australia). School 3 is located in a suburban area with mid-high , socio-economic status, most of the students are native English speakers, there are two boys and two girls (all are native english speakers), all of this information can be found on page 80 of the article. These three groups have different backgrounds all which impact the way that these young students interpret the same picture book.

Genre

The genre of this piece of writing would be a research article. The authors present a question and use evidence from an experiment that has been conducted to find an outcome to the research question. The authors go on and take the reader along through their discoveries by chronologically stating what steps they took, from some background information on what their hypothesis was (page 76), to then mentioning the effects of a students digging deeper and making personal connections with images in books (page77), to how they relate to characters in books (page 79), and finally by going through the process of their hands-on learning experiment (pages 80-88). The authors gathered real life data which made this a research article where they could write about their discoveries.

Language and Tone

The language and tone of this research article is very professional. There is decently mid to high vocabulary used, words like pedagogy, self-perceptions, ambiguity, spontaneously, accumulated, and comprehension (pages 76 and 89). Words that are not difficult to understand for someone that is older or has a higher education, but for younger children, the words may be difficult to understand. This is why, although this article looks into how students interpret books, that does not mean that they have to understand and study this process at their young age. The article was meant for teachers and other people interested in the topic, and we can see that by the language and tone in the text.

Evidence

The evidence that is used in this article includes all of the information from the studies that were conducted. By collecting data from asking young students from different backgrounds, the authors were able to compare and contrast the ways that the children each interpret the same picture book and the connections to each of their individual experiences. The students selected

for this experiment were asked to read the book and think about the images. Then they were asked to pick out their favorite part of the book and draw out how they thought they were connected to the book. From this, they found that 15 of the 16 students finished the assignment and one did not. Three of the students submitted two pieces of artwork each, which brought the total to 18 submissions. They then go in and dissect the data from one specific student, in this case, they looked into Rebecca's drawing (page 82). From her drawing, they found that she identifies herself as an artist and she constantly draws on her own time and shares her artwork with her family and friends. She seems to have a connection with the book because the character that is similar in age to her, shares the same artistic identity.

Organization

This article is in chronological order, beginning at the original research question, then followed by background information on the idea that the authors are looking into, then evidence from the experiment they are conducting, and finally their conclusion of the analysis. That was the proper way to organize the information in this case since the information should be laid out in the same order in which they gathered the information. This way it is easy for the reader to follow along and understand each step of the process. Another important part that they added was the errors in the experiment trial. For example, when the authors mention that only 15 of the 16 selected students actually completed the tasks that they were given (page 81 and 82). This also shows something about the one student that did not complete the assignment. Maybe they were busy and did not get around to completing it, or they forgot, or maybe they just did not want to do it, no matter what the reasoning was, it is now part of the process of finding different outcomes and perspectives.

Introduction and Conclusion

The introduction dives into some necessary background information for the reader to get to know what information is already known to the authors before they conduct the research experiment that they will conduct later on in the article. There is mention of the possible outcomes of the experiment, as well as mention of what might be some things that the students will relate to. After they run the experiment with the young students and gather their information, they come to the conclusion that the interpretations made by the students range from interpretations and understandings of things that they are familiar with like their social and cultural backgrounds, as well as their personal identities and the ways in which they see themselves (page 89). Most importantly, the authors have learned that there is a connection between the way that the students get to self-reflect and learn about themselves, as well as the ways they open up to their teachers and peers around them when they are sharing their interpretations from a book.

Works Cited

Jessica Mantei, and Lisa Kervin. "Interpreting the Images in a Picture Book: Students Make Connections to Themselves, Their Lives and Experiences." *English teaching : practice and critique* 13.2 (2014): 76-. Print.