

A SPECIAL CASE OF INTERMEDIALITY: INTERANIMATION OF TEXT AND PICTURES IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING PICTURE BOOKS



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Abstract. The focus of this essay is on a special case of intermediality: the interanimation of text and pictures in English-speaking picture books. Producing readings, constructing meaning, encoding and decoding at two levels of signification and communication – verbal and visual representation – are the essential activities looked into. Picture books as fascinating products at the intersection of literature and art are conducive to multiple effects, purposes and functions. Especially when aiming to competently select and creatively use picture books with child readers, various aspects and areas of expertise need to be considered: Children's Literature Studies; literacy development; semiotics; book illustration; didactics; interculturality. So we take a broad approach to the complex issue and discuss it from a variety of different perspectives, stressing the interdisciplinary character of the subject, the cross-over between Literary Studies, Linguistics, Fine Arts, Educational Theory, Didactics and Cultural Studies.

Key words: intermediality, picture books, interanimation of text and pictures, verbal and visual representation, Iconotext, Children's Literature, literacy development, semiotics, book illustration, didactics, interculturality.

Definition of intermediality (1)

Very generally ‘intermediality’ refers to two media or channels of communication that interact with each other and thus produce additional meaning. This is no simple or one-way process. On the contrary, it can be very complex and demanding and actually produce very diverse results – depending on the quality of text and pictures, the experience and versatility of readers / recipients as well as the respective context(s).

Christian Kresse offers us a more specialized definition of intermediality within the landscape of today’s discourses:

Intermedialität bezeichnet in der Kultur-, Medienwissenschaft und Publizistik die Untersuchung der Beziehungen zwischen Medien, insbesondere von Möglichkeiten ästhetischer Kopplungen bzw. Brüchen. Intermediale Beziehungen können innerhalb und zwischen den traditionellen, handwerklichen Künsten, den analogen technisch-apparativen sowie den digitalen Medien (Neue Medien) bestehen. Der Begriff kann auch den gezielten Medienwechsel oder die Gleichzeitigkeit verschiedener Ausdrucksformen beschreiben, z. B. Bild und Ton, Sprache und Musik, Neue Medien und Theater [Intermedialität 2010]¹.

That is, in Cultural Studies, Media Studies and Journalism the term signifies a kind of interaction between different media; the possibility of aesthetic combinations, but also tensions or contradictions. It can be a relationship within or between various traditional and New Media. Additionally it may denote a deliberate change of media or a simultaneity of various modes of expression (e.g. picture and sound, language and music, New Media and the theatre).

The present paper elaborates on a special mode of interaction between word and picture in a particular genre of Children’s Literature: (English-speaking) picture books. To tackle the issue as a special case of intermediality, several approaches need to be integrated with each other.

2. The formative years of childhood, the impact of primary and reading socialization on reading texts and pictures

Let us start with an autobiographical approach to investigate the extremely important role and function of primary and reading socialization in this area. In retrospect I can just muse why, how and when I became so fascinated with pictures, colours and shapes, illustrations and picture books. Yet I suspect: it must have something to do with my childhood. Children and childhood

¹ Reference to Christian Kresse. Intermedialität in Avatar, eXistenZ und Die Unendliche Geschichte (<http://ck-production.de/intermedialitat-in-avatar-existenz-und-die-unendliche-geschichte>), ck-production.de of 11 May 2010 (fn 1 on p. 2).

at large intrigued me since I started out to become a teacher, when I became a student of English, Russian, pedagogics and psychology in 1973. From then on investigation of these phenomena – first in Russian children’s literature and then in English-speaking literature for adults and children across history to the present – developed into a life-long intense scholarly commitment. It permeates both my research and teaching of British Literature (from the Medieval period to Postcolonial Studies / New English Literatures) at the tertiary level. The early origins of all this can be located in my own reading socialization. It is an exemplary case of a child’s growth and maturation through initiation into the process of decoding two media, words and pictures.

My parents were freelancers. They started out as graphic designers and illustrators in the GDR in the mid-1950-s and used to draw and paint, do handicrafts and play with plasticine a lot with me and my brother. I liked this very much, but took it rather for granted. I thought this was something all parents did with their children – nothing extraordinary at all. How amazed was I when I found out – when entering school and meeting more of my peers in their family homes – that drawing and painting with one’s parents did not take place everywhere. Why not? Did the other children’s parents not illustrate books? No! As my peers made me wise about: their parents were coal-dealers, bakers, engineers, seamstresses, cooks, working in plants and factories or in agriculture. So this was the point in time

when I started to grasp that my parents worked in a special field and that we children grew up somewhat differently.

My primary school career started a fortnight after the Berlin wall had begun to be erected on 13 August 1961. In retrospect, it occurs to me that, on the one hand, our family structure, the gender roles and parental contributions to our family life and me and my brother’s education, were quite representative of life at that time in that country: *both* parents worked. Yet on the other hand, these practices were also special because, being freelance artists, my parents worked at home. My mother always got up early with us children. She woke us up, helped us to get dressed, prepared breakfast and allowed us to listen to our favourite children’s programme on the radio over breakfast. At times she would also keep us amused with stories she made up on the spur of the moment. These were special highlights, of course. On top of all this she managed, by the by, to rehearse school tasks for the day with us: reciting, re-telling, vocabulary or counting. A mother of today would perhaps already be exhausted after such a ‘breakfast’ that appeared quite natural, but was in fact rich in many little educational and artistic inspirations. Today, especially story-telling is seen as an excellent prerequisite for developing literacy in children.

Well, the characteristic state of the art today, more than half a century later, is that this kind of special communication practiced in the family between parents and children over mealtimes

back in those days, would perhaps not necessarily be appreciated today any more – by both school children and young parents. The notions of the educational roles of school and home / family (ideally a close cooperation) have changed several times over the last decades alone. At present, they can be very vague in some areas, with the consequence that there are white spots left, gaps, where commitment is evaded by both sides – to the disadvantage of the children. Besides, today's young ones want to be as autonomous as only possible at the earliest point in time. They often feel rather awkward or embarrassed about parental interference into their education, do not even want their parents to be too well informed about certain goings-on in their 'other' lives – at school or in their spare time outside the home, with their peers. And young parents today are at times indecisive about which roles to adopt in home education, wanting to avoid to be drawn into potential areas of conflict that they, perhaps, would rather like to hand over to school.

In light of these difficult discourses it is remarkable indeed that international critical assessments of systems of education world-wide, conducted particularly frequently since the beginning of the new millennium, have in retrospect proved and acknowledged the invaluable contributions of parents (in the majority, mothers) to children's early socialization in the middle of the twentieth century. They even recommend a revival of some such practices, above all, to reintroduce having meals together in the family,

which in its turn often improves interpersonal communication and triggers more affection. Shared meals and meaningful communication, reading books with children and telling bedtime stories etc. – these are the things that have obviously particularly suffered in the later emergence of more 'modern' family lifestyles. These days often all family members go off in different directions in the morning, spend the whole day apart from each other and perhaps do not even share things once they reunite in the evening. Supposedly there is no time for reading or storytelling before bedtime, though (often unadmitted) for shopping, surfing in the internet, chatting for hours on end or frequenting the social media. So an occasional look into the past – not for sentimental reasons, out of nostalgia, but as a conscience-raising measure – is not an effort spent in vain. It may help to revive an important potential for making children's and adults' lives happier and richer (under changed conditions, of course).

Back to our family: being thus brought physically and mentally into good shape and accompanied by many motherly good wishes and pieces of advice, admonitions and emotional encouragement, my brother and me were released into the day and the school part of our lives. I was excitedly looking forward to the many new things awaiting me there and curious to learn yet more about a world still largely unknown or hidden to me (especially what with the restrictions governing life in an Eastern bloc country). Books and

pictures (and not only those that were part of the official canon at a socialist school deeply buried in the provinces) were and would remain one of the most important channels of information and communication, of access to other / foreign languages, people and cultures, marking my symbolic entrance into the world. Later during the day, while taking care of the household at the same time, my mother would work on her own artistic projects or join my father for work on books they did together.

My father's regime of the day looked different. He got up later, for good reason: while the rest of the town was mostly fast asleep, he was busy sketching, drawing and painting late at night (without nasty disturbances to occur during the day), at times even well into the early hours of the morning. His creative process was accompanied by numerous cigarettes and pipes of tobacco. And assisted by music from the radio in the 'atelier,' my parents' artistic studio. It was playing almost continuously. Classical music, folk songs, jazz, swing, popular music – everything was welcome and appreciated. And we children were thus introduced to a broad variety of music with or without words from different times and cultures in a rather matter-of-factly, unobtrusive way. An additional side effect was perhaps that through listening to all this music, we were initiated into the interaction of text and music, sound and meaning, though we certainly did not yet understand at this time that a tune / a melody per se has no contents, no ideological value (un-

less accompanied by words, a text).

So, though not able to do my homework with music in my *own* room (in later years, as a teenager), very astonishingly, I had no trouble at all to work with music in the background in the 'atelier.' When I was poring over tasks in mathematics or physics – not quite my cup of tea! – my father would give me occasional 'mental lifts,' interrupt his work – as my mother also often did – explain something, show me an example, rephrase a task or a text, draw a sketch for better illustration. So for us children the atelier became a training room, a mental gym.

My brother and me were allowed to enter that magic place, the place of artistic creation, at any time. It was located upstairs, in the attic of our house. It was a fascinating location indeed. A different world in which a different time seemed to rule, or, to be more precise, normal rules were slightly defunct: a *different life* was taking place there, the life of the fantastic, of imagination in stories and pictures. In the long run my brother and me could not but learn and understand more things about the physical and artistic processes of book-making, of our parents' complex and challenging, but also intriguing profession. We engaged in more artistic / creative activities, at home, with my parents, or later at Grammar School where my father initiated and ran a special Art Club for many years. We were lucky to be allowed to work with very diverse materials and practice many different artistic techniques such as watercolour, brush-painting, mosaics, potato

print, ceramics, pottery, stained glass work, linoleum, papier-mâché, working with textiles. Later my father would explain Goethe's Theory of Colours to us and train us in determining the comparative or subjective emotional / psychological values of shades / hues in the colour scale. We learned about primary and secondary colours, experimented with mixing them ourselves and came up with the most fantastic results – whether successfully, as intended, or – in case of 'failure' – with rather *accidental* results. The latter ones were equally welcome, and great fun! After all, trial and error must not necessarily be a painful experience in art. Moreover, my father surprised and delighted us with demonstrations of optical illusions, visual representations that deliberately provoked misunderstandings in the eye and mind of the beholder: a very important lesson to learn. Yet later I developed a lively interest in photography – another activity offering splendid possibilities to experiment with a broad range of aspects such as motif, angle / point of view, perspective, size, distance, shape, light, colour, arrangement / composition, mood and aesthetic effect on the beholder.

Over the decades my parents illustrated and designed, but also wrote hundreds of books (e.g. German, GDR, but also Russian, English, American, French, Spanish and Scandinavian literature in translation; classics as well as contemporary works; some of the GDR books were even translated into foreign languages) in very diverse artistic styles. So under the stunned eyes of me

and my brother thousands of illustrations kept on emerging in the atelier. Whenever we entered it after school, something new and amazing had cropped up in the meantime. Without being fully aware of this in our early childhood, we were really 'spoilt' and privileged. Art / fiction / creation / imagination as a daily reality and environment! The pictures took us imaginarily to foreign, far away or exotic countries, remoter or closer historical epochs, to people, cultures, languages and lifestyles we could never have encountered otherwise, in reality. Only after the fall of the Berlin Wall were we able to see more of that. How my parents managed to evoke all these marvels artistically and imaginatively is a question that amazed Western critics already during the Cold-War era. This does not only testify to the outstanding artistic achievement of the book-makers – their books won a number of national and international awards, – but also to what excellent picture books may do for young readers in so many different ways, e.g. in creative / artistic, educational, social, psychological, linguistic, cognitive, (inter)cultural and ideological terms. So this was our early start into the magic world of picture books, an early recognition of the rich and varied potential they hold, a guess at what words and pictures may mean when combined with each other, the fun and inspiration of decoding and encoding.

There was a lot of innovation involved in all this. My mother and my father were the first ones in their respective families who became

book illustrators – there was no real professional model available for them. And when they started their studies they could not even study ‘book illustration,’ because there was no academic subject like that yet. Besides, one could not have earned a living with illustrating books at that time. So what they studied was commercial art and graphic design. They painted posters, designed and created advertisements and built and decorated exhibitions, always on the lookout for additional jobs. I still recall the stories of my parents how my mother took care of us children while my father went to Berlin. Walking across the ruins of the post-war city with his drawings and sketches in a file under his arm, he was trying to find a publishing house that had survived the war, been restored or newly founded to be commissioned to illustrate a book. It worked! Over the next forty years Elfriede and Eberhard Binder became internationally renowned artists, developed a unique style and tremendous expertise in book illustration (picture books, books for young readers, adult literature, fiction and non-fiction). Yet above all they made illustrating books a real, serious, demanding and well-reputed profession.

And what became of us, their children? My brother Thomas Binder, three years younger than me, also became a graphic designer and il-

lustrator. When he took up his own studies at the end of the 1970-s / beginning of the 1980-s, he was already able to study book illustration as an academic / artistic subject in its own right, with renowned professors at a prestigious College of Art. By now he is a well-reputed, prolific artist himself. And me? Well, I am the odd one out, the only one in the family who does *not* draw and paint (alas, my horses always looked strange and I never fully mastered the mystery of perspective!). But I have made use of other affiliated talents, turned to another ‘useless’ art, literature. This is *my* world. Yet even for me a life without pictures or colours is impossible. Having been so deeply inspired in my childhood and youth by the artistic legacy of my family I have tried to make optimal use of this potential in my own developing field of expertise. Mine is the art of words, but I continue to work on book illustration, texts and pictures in my field, English Literature. Additionally, I have tested my skills in creative writing, published a non-fiction children’s book on castles, illustrated by my brother¹, and a picture book with poetry for children (riddles about animals in reality, poetry, songs and fairytales), illustrated by my father². These activities strengthened my skills of ‘writing visually’, my creative competences in optimally adjusting texts to pictures. But of course this is only possible if

¹ Bimberg, Ch., & Binder, E. (1986). *Burgen stolz und kühn*. Berlin: Altberliner Verlag (further editions in subsequent years). First UK edition: *Introducing Castles*. Brighton: Young Library Limited, 1989.

² Bimberg, Ch., & Binder, E. (2004). *Das kleine Rätselbuch*. Hamburg: Carlsen.

writer / author and artist / illustrator know each other, can work together. Having these talents within one family is an ideal presupposition, but far from being an ordinary constellation on today's book market.

3. Transition: transforming Children's Literature and picture books into an academic discipline

In a similar way that my parents managed over the decades to develop professional standards for illustrating (particularly children's) books, thus simultaneously contributing to an increase of the status of children's literature at large (through *artistic* production, along with some papers, essays, work in juries, teaching pupils), it took me several decades as well to achieve an affiliated *academic* goal: transforming children's literature into a significant academic subject at the tertiary level in research and teaching, and thus likewise increasing its status. In a later stage, this included picture books, an art product ideally located in the splendid 'in between' of the Fine Arts and literature.

All this took place in a sequence of stages. I wrote my diploma thesis on Russian Children's literature (at universities in the GDR and in Russia), but there was no chance in the mid-1970-s to continue with a doctoral thesis on a 'trivial subject' like Children's Literature. So I expanded and deepened my scholarly skills 'in the meantime' with a doctorate on English Renaissance Literature and a habilitation on

Restoration Literature. Yet I never lost sight of my favourite subject, continued and developed my interest in Children's Literature. The 1990-s, with the 'Wende' opening up new possibilities for innovation in various fields, also in English Studies in Germany, saw me introducing the first courses on British and American Children's Literature, first in the East, then in the West of the reunited Germany. Term papers, exams, bachelor, master and doctoral theses followed. Papers were given, conferences organized and essays and books published. A handful of colleagues from all over Germany, newly-appointed professors like me, took the initiative, became trail-blazers, encouraged younger scholars venturing into the field and eventually made these studies an integral and significant part of English Studies in Germany. By now no student studying English at a university in Germany has to excuse any more for wanting to engage in these studies (though the subject is *not* yet taught everywhere, and courses on picture books are still an exception). Children's Literature Studies have by now, after a quarter of a century, become very professional, substantial and even sophisticated. They require to integrate knowledge, skills, methods and scholarly resources from very many different areas (even outside of Literary Studies) and have become a truly cross- and- interdisciplinary subject. My own teaching / investigating English Literature from the Medieval period to Postcolonial studies provides me with excellent presuppositions for this subject: it is a rich intellectual 'playground',

whose various, very heterogeneous, sections keep on mutually influencing each other and enriching my competencies in Children's Literature Studies. Moreover, the subject does not simply eclectically follow and imitate what's going on in General Literary Theory and Criticism. On the contrary, as many publications and contributions to international scholarly journals demonstrate, the new discipline has set new trends, initiated innovative investigations able to re-inspire work in traditional subjects. As Maria Nikolajeva put it very nicely and truly in 1996: Children's Literature has come of age. And so do their studies!

4. Intermediality in picture books

Starting out with what picture books are at all it becomes obvious that the current definitions do not all agree about this in detail. Sylvia S. Marantz has it that picture books

have a lot of pictures, or are predominantly pictures. Many picture book artists and critics have added the proviso that the pictures in a picture book should do more than simply reinforce the words of the story; they should also add to the story, give it new dimensions, even tell another additional story. Sometimes there are few words or no words at all, and the pictures "tell" the entire story. [...] A picture book becomes a work of art as much for the care that goes into its overall design as for the individual pictures within it. Children can both appreciate and criticize this concept once they understand the

components involved [Marantz 1992: 1–2].
For Nancy C. Anderson,

What makes a picture book distinctive is that it conveys its message through a series of pictures with only a small amount of text (or none at all). The illustrations are as important as – or more important than – the text in conveying the message. Books that have no text at all are called *wordless picture books* or *textless books*. [...] Picture storybooks are picture books with a plot, with the text and illustrations equally conveying the story line. [...] In fact, the umbrella term *picture book* is commonly used to refer to any book that has more illustrations than text [Anderson 2002: 11].

Furthermore, the addressees of picture books, the reading audiences, may be different ones. (cross-writing / dual address). As Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott [2001] point out,

Many picturebooks are clearly designed for both small children and sophisticated adults, communicating to the dual audience at a variety of levels. Colin Thompson's *Looking for Atlantis* (1993) is an excellent example of a book that plays to an audience extending from non-reader to literate adult. Adults are thoroughly steeped in the conventions of the book and are practiced at decoding text in a traditional manner, following the expected temporal unfolding of events and scanning from left to right. But Thompson's intricate iconotexts, with illustrations comprising

a multitude of miniscenes and tangential pictorial events, are ideally suited to the child's less practiced but perceptive eye. Thus he levels the playing field for his varied audience by requiring less tutored skills of perception and picture decoding. Clearly the best audience is a team of adult and child together, each offering special strengths [*ibid.*: 21].

As can be seen from the above, a number of factors and aspects need to be taken into account in order to ensure a varied and competent practice of reading picture books, of constructing meaning, decoding and encoding messages at the verbal and the visual level, understanding the interacting of the two media of words / texts and pictures. This is simply important to be aware of for parents / adults and teachers when engaging in reading activities with children / pupils. The ideal goal in tertiary education is to train students (particularly, but not only, future teachers of English) in making optimal use of the complex potential of picture books: in cognitive, emotional, imaginative and psychic; linguistic, literary and semiotic; visual / pictorial, artistic and aesthetic; educational, social, moral, ideological; intercultural and critical terms. They need to be selected competently and used creatively to inspire meaningful processes of reading and sharing. A skilful decoding and encoding of texts and pictures at very many different levels (cf. Reader-Response Theory), is a major presupposition for this.

So a careful examination of various issues in

different areas of expertise is essential for people who will be endowed with professional authority later on and thus in a position to decisively impact the future reading behaviour of their pupils. They have a huge responsibility as to whether the children will eagerly respond to their offers or rather stop reading already in their early teens. Reading socialization influences reading careers. They in turn impact school careers positively or negatively. It is dangerous, even negligent, to ignore these interrelations. Underrating the disastrous long-term effects of a neglect of literacy development does not pay off!

As a consequence, I have developed my own methodology over the years in introducing students to research and teaching in this area. I recommend to take a broad and intense approach. As I see it, knowledge, skills and competences need to be trained and achieved in the following areas of expertise.

4.1. History and theory of Children's Literature

Students making their first start into this fascinating, but also highly challenging, field need to gain a sense of history, an awareness of the historicity, the changing character of the concept of literature at large, particularly the long process of the emergence of children's literature in and outside of Europe, its shifting definition, significance, status and reputation. All this impacts an understanding how this type of literature managed to develop into an academic

discipline with its own theory and critical standards at all. These notions are not unrelated to shifting images of the child and conceptions of childhood in the course of history [cf. Binder 2014; 2016]. There is a whole logical chain of interlinked factors in operation in this field:

- the contemporary / current ideal or image of the child
- the contemporary / current concept of child-, girl- and boyhood or masculinity/ femininity
- the various signifying practices and discourses in society
- the notion / ideal of education in a society and culture at a given time
- the consequences for a useful / enjoyable reading regarded as suitable or adequate for children.

Above all it is important to recognize that the whole complex of children's literature is no neutral or innocent ground, but an ideological minefield [Hunt 1994: 186; Bimberg 2001: 322]. So students should enter the field well-‘armed’, i.e. well-equipped, to be able to master it and not give in to naïve, simple or reductionist assumptions. Everything children read is permeated by obvious or latent / hidden ideologies constructed by adult writers and artists. To decipher all this, respond to it critically, produce independent ideas and act upon them accordingly, are key qualifications in our present life. They correlate with current professional stances adopted in child psychology that have found their way into today's pedagogical

notions of an adequate upbringing and education of children: the training of empowerment and resilience. A child brought up and encouraged not to blindly believe in texts and pictures is unlikely to fall prey to dubious ideologies or questionable adult demands made on them later on. Children growing up in such a way will (hopefully) be different (i.e. responsible) people and citizens in the future – in their jobs, partnerships, marriages, families, communities, cultures and particular environments.

4.2. Reading research, literacy development and reading pedagogy

Jill P. May pointed out in 1995 that most of her undergraduate students were drawn to the teaching profession not because of their love of reading, but that of children. In fact most of them had not even been readers in their youth. They did not expect difficult reading, critical thinking, individual analysis or divergent literary interpretations from a course on Children's Literature [May 1995: 5–8; Bimberg 2000: 292–299; Bimberg 2001: 323]. May also came to the conclusion that only children who have experienced the pleasure (and not the pain) of reading, become active, critical and life-long readers. And that different texts / types of texts make different readers [May 1995: 9–13, 33, 88ff.; Bimberg 2000: 293; Bimberg 2001: 323–24]. I.e., promoting reading, training (cultural) literacy is an essential presupposition for decoding texts and pictures. Personally, I do not think that children

read differently from adults, at least not fundamentally: they also decode, relate their reading to their life experiences, transfer this back to the texts and pictures, and encode meaning. It is just because their life and reading experiences differ from those of adults that different meanings are constructed, that the relationship between signifier and signified is endowed with diverging results. And, most significantly, this way of constructing meaning is no one way-affair. It allows for plurality, multiperspectivity, varied and multiple responses. The strange thing is that although Reader Response Theory has long since explained why this is possible (the gaps / lacunae are filled with individual / personal associations), and several generations of students have been taught both the theory as well as its application to analysis and interpretation, the school practice of enforcing the one-and-only 'right' or favourite interpretation of a teacher is only very slowly disappearing. Rarely does one meet a student who was truly encouraged to produce his / her own independent and critical reading of a work of literature. Of course it may be 'easier' for both teachers and pupils to still practice the 'deal' of soon making their peace with what is taught and how. Yet even fixed teaching curricula in the sixteen federal states of Germany (and elsewhere in the world!) are no excuse for always opting out for the simple, the easy, the obvious. No wonder that a lot of this results in unbearable boredom. Reading becomes equated with waste of time, uselessness, unattractivity, lack of per-

sonal significance. Individuality, motivation and autonomy of the learner, empowerment and resilience are something different! They start with being allowed as a child reader to determine the meanings of texts and pictures for oneself! So what is at stake here is the essential competence of making sense and constructing meaning individually and share it with others, i.e. negotiating readings and opinions. This explains why reading research, literacy development and reading pedagogy hold an indispensable place in the training of students as future teachers. Whatever book is chosen for work with children – the text already should hold a certain potential to encourage readers to construct and share meaning. The same is true for pictures, of course.

Within the frame of this paper I just want to single out two pieces of secondary literature that I regard as particularly valuable in this area, conducive to classifying and strategically developing children's responses to literature. They are applicable (with slight modifications) to picture books as well. Investigating stages of teenagers' reading development and their strategies to construct meaning, Thomson [1996] comes to the conclusion that teaching methods should not emphasize "reading skills in isolation from meaningful contexts and interests in story" [*ibid.*: 584]. Enjoyment is as important as aesthetics when teaching literature. Readers and books need to be matched. A knowledge about developmental stages and their characteristics might enable teachers to help readers to progress from stage to

stage, to read with more enjoyment. In order to determine literary competence, reading activities or strategies need to be identified that constitute such competence. So, in his investigation, Thomson tried to find out about clearly identifiable staging points in students' literary development (towards a greater control over texts) and about the strategies used at each stage. As he shows further on, when elaborating on a developmental model of teenagers' processes of reading literature, the students' reading strategies at each stage or level are cumulative and progressive [*ibid.*, 584–585]. In Thomson's developmental model of teenagers' processes of reading literature, the students progress through a sequence of inter-linked stages in their development as readers. The process stages or kinds of satisfaction are:

- unreflective interest in action
- empathizing with characters
- analogizing and searching for self-identity
- reflecting on the significance of events (theme) and behaviour (distanced evaluation of characters)
- reviewing the whole work as a construct or fabrication
- a consciously considered relationship with the text, recognition of textual ideology, and understanding of self and of one's own reading process [*ibid.*: 586].

They all go along with respective process strategies [*ibid.*: 586–590]. Concluding, Thomson

highlights:

One of the most productive and unanticipated findings of the research interview / workshops is that conscious understanding of one's own productive reading strategies – or reflexivity – can be taught at each stage of reading development. [...] At the end of the interview / workshop all the students expressed some satisfaction in their newly acquired knowledge of their own reading powers. [...] The importance of the supportive and secure interview / workshop situation is, I think, that in it the students became conscious of the constructive strategies that the questions led them to use. [...] their consciousness of their own productive reading strategies is a powerful educational tool [*ibid.*: 590–592].

I.e., children / readers need to explore the nature of texts and how they themselves decode and encode meaning. This results in an awareness of the constructedness of literature as well as their own power in recognizing this and making use of it.

Also working in the field of literacy pedagogy, Geoffrey Williams [1996] directs our attention to the fact that what is being read, the texts, is no neutral substance, but triggers diverse effects in readers [cf. Binder 2014: ch. 11]:

Only in the last decade has a different formulation, 'Texts construct children's reading,' entered discussions about how children learn to read, although understanding of the agency of texts in the

making of readers has now become an important aspect of the children's literature field. Scholars such as Meek and Nodelman (1988) cross the established boundaries of academic disciplines to develop their accounts of the subtlety and significances of literary texts written for children, often surprising readers by how transdisciplinary the reach of such work is, and needs must be. Such studies draw on research in semiotics, socio-cultural theories of children's mental development, histories of literacy¹ and, increasingly, anthropological and sociological studies of cultural differences in narrative practices [*ibid.*: 574].

So Williams investigates how texts construct children's reading, points out the need to understand the agencies of texts in the making of readers. Drawing on Meek, her reference to the 'untaught lessons' in reading², he demonstrates:

These accounts of untaught reading lessons rest on the textuality of the literature children read, and they therefore require careful investigation of how meanings are built up by the patterning of visual and linguistic elements of individual texts. It is worth taking a few moments with the detail, so that the specific resources for these signifying practices are made visible [*ibid.*: 574].

At the centre of Williams's attention is the semiotic patterning of texts. The child learns about development of plot from it.

Williams uses Maurice Sendak: *Where the Wild Things Are* (1970) as an example. Important for an understanding of the plot relations is the excitement of the depicted events, the necessity to turn the page. But how does the patterning of the resources of language and image impact / construct the sense and significance of event? Subsequently he directs the attention in the analysis of images to aspects such as direct gaze, demand and angle of view. When the latter changes in the book, he inquires into the significance of this variation [*ibid.*: 574–575]:

In Western European visual semiotic resources, angle of view is the primary means through which a relation of power between viewer and represented image is construed. [...] In this text the images instruct us to adopt variable power relations with Max as part of the plot development – first, we are more or less his equal; then, in his moment of abandonment we become 'superior' in power – or, perhaps more accurately, Max is relatively diminished in power; and then, as the plot develops, our power diminishes relative to the participants in the ensuing monstrous clash [*ibid.*: 575–576].

¹ Cf. Binder 2014: ch. 11.

² Reference by Williams to M. Meek (1988). *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn*. South Woodchester: Thimble Press, 7.

Williams then turns to the significance of variation in the patterning of meanings as to language. The question here is how readers are linguistically given a sense of the special qualities of that night (of Max's night of transgression, journey and restoration). In this context Williams refers to Vygotsky [*ibid.*: 576]:

They [children – C.M.B.] learn how to act as literary readers partly because the resources of the texts they care about make it possible for them to act as literary readers.

The sense of 'act' is important. It draws attention to the fact that literacy is constructed in action, in and through the reading of texts and through engaging in the forms of interpretation which these texts make possible. The selection of verb here in fact owes much to Vygotsky's insight into the resources which mediate meaning in interaction and over time become part of a child's ways of meaning [*ibid.*: 576]¹.

However, agreeing with Wells (1985), Williams makes clear that the reading of stories per

se does not lead to reflective, disembedded thinking needed for success at school. The total interaction in which the story is embedded is important. Children need competent adults to mediate between themselves and the text. Even when they are able to decode and encode themselves, they need to be assisted in interpreting heard or read stories and in shaping self-invented ones. So the role of adults (parents, teachers) is as important as the story itself [*ibid.*: 578]².

Furthermore, intercultural variation (cf. Heath)³, intra-cultural variation by social class locations (Williams)⁴, a sensitivity of joint book reading practices to social location need to be considered as well. Literacy differences are not simply educational differences in another guise [*ibid.*: 578]. What is patterned in a text? This investigation requires metasemiotic tools. Children particularly need to understand the significance of variation in language [*ibid.*: 580]. Competencies in semiotic design and linguistic variation are essential for a better understanding how literary texts mean [*ibid.*: 581]. Concluding,

¹ Reference by Williams to L.S. Vygotsky. (1986). *Thought and Language*, ed. and trans. by A. Kozulin. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

² Reference by Williams to C.G. Wells (1985). "Pre-school literacy-related activities and success in school". In D.R. Olson et al. (Eds.), *Literacy, language and learning: the nature and consequences of reading and writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 253.

³ Reference by Williams to S.B. Heath (1983). *Ways with words: language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Reference by Williams to G. Williams (1995). *Joint book reading and literacy pedagogy: a socio-semantic examination*. Ph.D dissertation, School of English and Linguistics, Sydney: Macquarie University.

Williams resolves:

It seems that offering children some access to semiotic tools which enable them to describe visual and verbal patterning in literary text may have some potential to develop a different reading pedagogy, remaking it to include the possibility of children delighting intelligently and critically in the nature of a text's composition without excluding their enjoyment of the constructed story [*ibid.*: 582].

4.3. The semiotics of the picture book

This is the central part in our observations on intermediality. The regrettable practice of consumers in this area today is that picture books are frequently bought on the spur of the moment, by adults who cannot (or rather *think* they cannot) afford to spend much time on it. So the titles are largely bought because of their visual appeal, because the pictures are colourful (similar to liking a song for its tune and not, or only later, realizing that the text contains questionable messages). Sometimes customers and readers understand only later, upon closer inspection, that the text or the interaction of text and pictures are not quite up to the mark. I.e. they may contain hidden racist, sexist, politically incorrect or outmoded notions, positive or negative stereotyping.

A number of scholars have contributed decisively to this field, although they all come up with a slightly different terminology in which parts overlap and others differ from each other to some extent. I can just outline a few positions here, the various stances adopted towards

the interaction of verbal and visual representation. David Lewis [2001] defines interanimation as “[t]he process by which, in composite texts such as picturebooks, comics and graphic novels, the words and images mutually influence one another so that the meaning of the words is understood in the light of what the pictures show, and vice versa” [*ibid.*: 169]. The outcome of this interanimation of words and pictures is synergy in picture books [*ibid.*: 171].

Susan Hall [1990] points out several purposes of pictures in relationship to the text [*ibid.*: 7]. “Pictures set the mood of the story, reinforce facts in the text, counterpoint textual material, belie textual content, or actually tell another story altogether alongside the textual version” [*ibid.*: 7]. Furthermore, she accentuates the different ways pictures make us feel about the same information (a matter of style) as well as the interesting methods of textual and artistic interaction. Picture books may be ironic because of the contrast between what the words say and what the illustrations show. Two story lines can simultaneously be dealt with in picture books: the visual and the verbal [*ibid.*: 8].

Each can be separately phased to reinforce, anticipate, contrast, counterpoint, or expand one another. [...] Often it is the distance between the story the words tell and the story the pictures tell that makes a book interesting. Pleasure derives from our consciousness of this distance. Thus, parallel or contrasting visuals either correlate or

contrast with text so that illustrations tend to make the printed word more concrete and facilitate reader comprehension. [...]. Sometimes the illustrations may support the text; sometimes they contrast the text; sometimes they parallel the textual story with a story of their own. Always they set the mood of the story and serve to tell portions of the tale that are not told by the text. In this way the text and the illustrations complement one another by performing a different but cooperating venture to get the story told [*ibid.*: 8–9].

Perry Nodelman [1996], demonstrates the difficulty and complexity involved in children's decoding of pictures, using John Burningham's *Mr Gumpy's Outing* (1970) as an example [Bimberg 2001: 324–325]. He differentiates between images as iconic representations and words as symbolic representations and explains the need to translate the qualities of the image, e.g. lines, into (the look of) objects they represent. Pictures therefore require a pre-existing knowledge of actual objects to recognize which qualities of representations (e.g. colour) do resemble those of the objects represented, and which (e.g. lines) are only features of the medium or style of representation. Furthermore, a previous knowledge of pictorial conventions is needed, e.g. perspective (in Euro-

pean cultures since the Renaissance) and its interpretation (a culture-bound prejudice implied when looking at visual images). The expectation is that the picture represents the way things appear to a viewer. Yet in fact we are sometimes dealing with a simplified exaggeration rather than a resemblance. A knowledge of differing styles and their differing purposes is called for to recognize this. Interpreting different parts of the pictures in different ways is in fact a complex operation. Even simple delight depends on more complex and very sophisticated assumptions about what pictures do and how viewers ought to respond to them. Moreover, the differentiation between speaker / narrator and figure depicted / character in the story is important. And even 'simple delight' may be conveyed by astonishingly complex means in picture books, communicating within a network of assumptions and conventions (e.g. about visual and verbal representations and the real objects they stand for). All components of picture books are 'signs'¹. We need to become aware of the arbitrary conventions and distinctions unconsciously taken for granted in order to discover how much that which seems natural is complex and artificial. Nodelman makes a plea for seeing picture books in semiotic terms as a very important presupposition to understand

¹ Reference by Nodelman to Umberto Eco's definition of a sign: "something [which] stands to somebody for something else in some respect or capacity" (Umberto Eco [1985], "Producing Signs," in M. Blonsky (Ed.), *On Signs*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 176).

them [*ibid.*, 114–116].

Because we assume that pictures, as iconic signs, do in some significant way actually resemble what they depict, they invite us to see objects *as* the pictures depict them – to see the actual in terms of the fictional visualisation of it.

Indeed, this dynamic is the essence of picture books. The pictures ‘illustrate’ the texts – that is, they purport to show us what is meant by the words, so that we come to understand the objects and actions the words refer to in terms of the qualities of the images that accompany them – the world outside the book in terms of the visual images within it. In persuading us that they do represent the actual world in a simple and obvious fashion, picture books are particularly powerful deceivers.

Furthermore, the intended audience of picture books is by definition inexperienced – in need of learning how to think about their world, how to see and understand themselves and others. Consequently, picture books are a significant means by which we integrate young children into the ideology of our culture [*ibid.*: 116].

From all this Nodelman deduces the necessity of an awareness “of the complex significations of the apparently simple and obvious words and pictures of a book like *Mr Gumpy’s Outing*” [*ibid.*: 117]. As a consequence of his detailed analysis and interpretation [*ibid.*, 117–123], he sums up:

If we look carefully, in fact, the words in picture books always tell us that things are not merely as

they appear in the pictures, and the pictures always show us that events are not exactly as the words describe them. Picture books are inherently ironic, therefore: a key pleasure they offer is a perception of the differences in the information offered by pictures and texts.

Such differences both make the information richer and cast doubt on the truthfulness of both of the means which convey it. The latter is particular [sic] significant: in their very nature, picture books work to make their audiences aware of the limitations and distortions in their representations of the world. Close attention to picture books automatically turns readers into semioticians [*ibid.*: 123].

Among the important results (in adult theorists and children) of an awareness of signs he emphasizes a consciousness and appreciation of the subtlety and cleverness of verbal and visual artists and an enjoyment of the illustrators’ and writers’ use of the codes of representation [*ibid.*: 123]. Yet more significantly:

[...] the more both adults and children realise the degree to which all representations misrepresent the world, the less likely they will be to confuse any particular representation with reality, or to be unconsciously influenced by ideologies they have not considered. Making ourselves and our children more conscious of the semiotics of the picture books through which we show them their world and themselves will allow us to give them the

power to negotiate their own subjectivities – surely a more desirable goal than repressing them into conformity to our own views [*ibid.*: 123].

So we see that the intersection of linguistic, artistic / aesthetic, semiotic and educational steps contributes to the empowerment and resilience of young readers.

Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott [2001] accentuate:

The unique character of picturebooks as an art form is based on the combination of two levels of communication, the visual and the verbal. Making use of semiotic terminology we can say that picturebooks communicate by means of two separate sets of signs, the iconic and the conventional.

Iconic, or representational, signs are those in which the signifier and the signified are related by common qualities; that is, where the sign is a *direct representation of its signified*¹. [...]

Conventional signs have no direct relationship with the object signified. [...]

Conventional signs are based on an agreement among the bearers of a particular language, both the spoken language and communications, such as gestures, dress code, or emblems. For anyone outside the given community, conventional signs do not carry any meaning, or, at best, the meaning is

ambivalent ([*ibid.*: 1]; my emphasis, C.M.B.).

Whereas words / conventional signs, whose function is to narrate, are often linear, pictures / iconic signs, describe and represent and are nonlinear. The tension produced between them makes the interaction between image and word in a picture book an affair of unlimited possibilities. So reading a picture book is likewise a hermeneutic circle of expectations, new experiences and new expectations. Employing Reader Response Theory one can see that the verbal and the visual text each have their own gaps. Images and words fill each other's gaps or leave gaps for the reader/viewer to fill [*ibid.*: 1–2].

Nikolajeva and Scott find the term 'iconotext' (Kristin Hallberg 1982) very useful: "an inseparable entity of word and image, which cooperate to convey a message" [*ibid.*: 6]². As to the picture book typology/the diverse types of interaction of the visual-verbal narration, the authors refer to Joseph Schwarcz, Perry Nodelman, Ulla Rheadin and Joanne Golden [*ibid.*: 6–7], but come up later with their own categories:

- symmetrical picturebook: two mutually redundant narratives
- complementary picturebook: words and pictures fill each other's gaps
- expanding or enhancing picturebook:

¹ Perhaps not quite so when one considers what Nodelman pointed out as to the deceptive nature of visual representation.²

² Reference by Nikolajeva and Scott to Kristin Hallberg (1982). "Litteraturvetenskapen och bilderboksforskningen". *Tidskrift för litteraturvetenskap* 3–4, 163–68.

visual narrative supports verbal narrative, verbal narrative depends on visual narrative

- counterpointing picturebook: two mutually dependent narratives
- sylleptic picturebook (with or without words): two or more narratives independent of each other [*ibid.*: 12].

Among the varieties of counterpoint they delineate: counterpoint in address, style, genre or modality, by juxtaposition, in perspective, in characterization, counterpoint of metafictional nature and counterpoint in space and time [*ibid.*: 24–26].

4.4. The history and technology of book illustration and graphic design

Very often the non-plus-ultra compliment paid to the illustrations / the artist of a picture book even today is: ‘Oh, how nice! Really colourful pictures!’ Wouldn’t it be a pity if students leaving university for school did not have anything better to say, were incapable of a more discerning judgment? Besides, in the field of *English-speaking* picture books there are a number of special constellations. Susan Hall directs out attention to the technical and artistic expertise gathered together in a quality picture book:

What is a picture book? This supposedly simple literary form turns out to be technically and

artistically an extremely precise medium which depends for its success upon many integrated factors, from the inception of an inspired idea to its salable finished package. The process is composed of artistic, literary, technical, and commercial talent to a degree not required in any other form of literature [*ibid.*: 6].

So the relationship between author and illustrator is important. Ideally they form a team. The specialty about English-speaking picture books is that author / writer and illustrator / artist are frequently one and the same person. Both writing and illustrating lie in the same hands, which is doubtless a benefit of its own. It is very likely that the special kind of interaction between text and pictures in such a case reaches a degree of perfection that is more difficult to achieve if author and illustrator cannot collaborate or do not even know each other.

Another consequence is that in such cases of a unit of writer and artist a picture book often emerges rather from an image. A visual idea instead of a crude plot idea, a first rough story-line or the vague notion of a theme or subject stand at the very beginning of the creative process. So the procedure of what adds to what – pictures to words or rather words to pictures – may be different already at the outset. Last but not least English-speaking picture books are often cross-written, for dual audiences. The potential readerships are not as neatly sorted out beforehand (or rather strictly separated into child and adult

audiences) as in German literature.

Why do we need to train knowledge, skills and competences in the field of book illustration? The history of the production of children's literature, illustrated and picture books – from woodcut, wood engravings, etchings and engravings via offset lithography to airbrushing and computer-generated graphics – has always been one of the literary market place, of market mechanisms and technological advances, but also of a sense of beauty in artistic representation. Inherently there is a close and momentous interdependency between the currently available technical possibilities of (re)production and printing, the artistic possibilities and the aesthetic appeal resulting from this, as well as the catering to as well as the responses of the respective consumers. Usually, sacrifices allowed for by a publishing house in the area of paper, illustration and print qualities never *pay off* (in a double sense of the word). Children have an instinctive sense of truth, beauty and quality. The physical, material, sensory appeal of the anatomy of a book, the care taken by an illustrator over details, are appreciated by them even at an early age. These and other aspects decide whether a book is not only frequently bought because the price cannot be undercut. It is important that a book finds its appreciative readers so that it can fulfil the functions intended by or hoped for by the book-makers. This should not be underestimated. Unfortunately these days lots of trash floods the market, whereas a number of excellent manuscripts

and illustrations never make it onto the market and into children's homes. A factor that perhaps contributes to this sad and highly dissatisfactory situation may be that in a number of publishing houses staff is managing the children's literature and picture book section that has no specialized training in the field. Skills of business administration are regarded as more important than artistic aspects of production. The fact that for several decades already well-trained young people leave universities and Art Schools with degrees and specialized profiles in literature and / or art without getting employment in their fields of expertise and having to work in jobs they were not trained for at all, suggests an absurdity that implies a waste of human and artistic potential.

These and other things simply make it indispensable for responsible and competent work with picture books to learn about the respective contexts of this professional area to understand its conditions and mechanisms. Knowledge about book illustration and the respective technical terms comes in handy. This includes:

- various types of books [Anderson 2002: 11-17]
- the anatomy of a book (Marantz 1992, 1-4; Lewis 2001, 168-71)
- the artistic media and techniques (Marantz 1992, 5-8; Anderson 2002, 49-51)
- graphic arts (Marantz 1992, 8-9; Lewis 2001, 168-171)
- other media and techniques [Marantz 1992: 9-10; Anderson 2002: 51]

- elements of design in art / visual elements of artistic design:
composition, space, (size or scale of) shapes, lines, outlines
perspective, point of view, vantage point
colours / hues
textures
types / typefaces [Marantz 1992: 10–14; Anderson 2002: 46–48].

Summing up this part, Marantz defines the artist's technique as "simply the way the *elements of design* are combined with media to make pictures [*ibid.*: 13].

- style (representationalism / realism, expressionism [e.g. Cubism, Fauvism, Art Deco, Pointillism], impressionism, surrealism, folk art, cartoon) [*ibid.*: 48–49].

The secondary literature in this area often takes a technical stance. This is good enough, of course, and very welcome because it helps to create a better sense of visual quality as achieved through technical / technological assistance.

The aesthetic dimension is more clearly integrated with the technical aspects of book-making and publishing by Martin Salisbury. He is both an academic and a practitioner: an illustrator and author on the theory and practice of children's book illustration. His current position is that of Professor at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge and Chelmsford, Course leader of

MA Children's Book Illustration and Director of the Centre for Children's Book Studies at the Cambridge School of Art. Besides, he is Chair of the International Jury for the Ragazzi Awards at the Bologna Children's Book Fair (<http://www.anglia.ac.uk/arts-law-and-social-sciences/cambridge-school-of-art/our-staff/martin-salisbury>; 2016. Web. 30.10.16, p. 1).

An excellent source for beginners and entry into the field is Salisbury's *Illustrating Children's Books. Creating Pictures for Publication* (2004). It encompasses a brief history (from the very first illustrated children's books to the twentieth century and current children's book illustration, including the digital revolution); drawing; media, materials and techniques; character development; the picture book [incl. the relationship between words and pictures]; illustration for older children; non-fiction illustration; design and typography and how to get published. A glossary rounds off this wonderful publication.

Complementing the former title in a much more specialized way and addressing different purposes and aims is Salisbury's recent title *100 Great Children's Picture Books* (2015). It addresses connoisseurs and specialists, but is also perfect for students eager to expand and deepen their knowledge and competences in this field. Presenting the 100 best specimen of children's picture books worldwide (the best of all ages and many different countries and cultures), the book is simultaneously a brilliant social and (inter)cultural history of Children's Literature, the

Fine Arts, publishing and printing. Excellent exemplary cases representing trends that are both expressive of the respective *zeitgeist* and unique, specimen that set new trends (innovative, experimental and pioneering work) build up in this title to a very complex and impressive picture of technical-artistic achievement. The character of an age, the current means of artistic expression, the technically available methods of realizing them, the mechanism of the market place are shown to be closely interlinked and impacting the reception history of the books. Particularly valuable for students: by commenting on texts and pictures, their respective qualities and their way of interanimation, the title offers concise (subjective) interpretations, helps to cultivate the tastes and competences of readers. Simply delightful! Of course, it makes me very proud to see that a picture book illustrated by my father, *Vom Dorle, das nicht schlafen wollte* (Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1964; first UK edition: *Mr Clockman*, 1967), was selected for presentation here [*ibid.*: 110–11].

4.5. The didactics of teaching in the Primary English Classroom

The curious thing when I gave a guest lecture at the Cambridge School of Art in spring 2011, was that a number of listeners had not been aware of the potential that picture books, originally written for little native speakers in English-speaking countries, also hold for children who learn English as a foreign language (EFL), e.g. in the Pri-

mary English Classroom or in kindergarten. The major problem to be solved didactically in this case is, of course: at what age / grade would the book be suitable for an EFL-class? Because of the linguistic difficulties involved, the English books can on average only be used two years later than with native speakers. Yet at that time a particular topic or mode of addressing it in text and pictures may already be too childish for German learners of English. So what English teachers in Germany always need to consider is the special correlation between the foreign language achievements and the psychological developmental level of the children [Bimberg 2000: 295].

The changes going on in the field of teaching and didactics clearly reflect the shifting attitudes over the past decades in both linguistics and educational theory: towards notions of language, assumptions about the learning of foreign languages and their learners, the theory and practice of language acquisition (in native and foreign tongues), the definition of attainable goals and adequate, timely and efficient methods of putting all this into practice – under constantly changing societal conditions worldwide and accompanied by socio-culturally very heterogeneous socializations of the young generations.

By now there is some amount of good secondary literature available in the EFL-field of expertise. Future teachers have access in tertiary education to a range of recommendations for a meaningful teaching of English-speaking Children's Literature, to a lesser extent also about pic-

ture books (in the Primary English Classroom and in Pre-School Education).

As to didactic approaches and didactic-methodical principles for the Primary English Classroom, Heide Niemann [2002] recommends:

- a focus on communication (a communicative approach, communicative lessons and competences)
- action orientation (role games, dialogues, a playful treatment of things listened to; working materials such as finger puppets, figures, masks, costumes; playful learning; 'cross-disciplinary project work; total physical response)
- intercultural learning
- authenticity
- use of nursery rhymes
- error tolerance [*ibid.*: 7–13; my English rendition, C.M.B.]

Summing up the many valuable hints and suggestions she lists the following didactic-methodical principles, making a plea for promoting enjoyment in dealing with language:

- selection of those subject matters for learning that are motivating for children
- special emphasis on artistic and playful elements
- integration of contents/subject matter into specific situations as part of an adequate context
- action orientation as a guiding principle
- inspiration of holistic forms of learning

(‘ganzheitliches Lernen’) through consideration of diverse types of perception in learners

- creation of a learning environment that is free of anxieties
- error tolerance
- consideration of individual learning presuppositions
- excellent language models among the teaching staff
- intersection of early English lessons with lessons of other subjects taught at school [*ibid.*: 14; my English rendition, C.M.B.]

As to teachers' concrete methods and strategies in promoting independent, creative and critical readings and constructions of meaning, Jill P. May recommends:

- a sharing of diverging books
- an emphasis on diversity: the use of diverse materials/texts from various genres (understanding and appreciation of literary form, purpose, style)
- the choice of intellectually challenging and aesthetically complex texts
- trying out of various types of classroom organization
- no preference of just one teaching stance
- the use of different approaches
- the use of various interlinked activities that allow for diverse responses
- no teaching of one point of view and way of reading, but how to question, analyse,

- respond and critique
- promoting formal critical stances about books and genres
- testing of schools of literary criticism for choosing appropriate approaches
- training of reader discernment (distinctive and mediocre literature)
- a focus on the child's developing attitudes
- a student-centred reading instruction
- concentration on individual successes rather than testable knowledge
- the role of teachers as mentors (critical analysis; application of critical theory to interpretation; helping children to develop personal learning strategies)
- avoidance of cultural, political, religious or social indoctrination
- promoting aesthetic appreciation, communication and critique [*ibid.*: 7–13].

May emphasizes that ideal readers are independent readers who discover (the author's) meaning for themselves [*ibid.*: 11]. Moreover, she applies the general (modern) notion of the interconnectedness of childhood and adulthood to patterns of reading behaviour. She refers to Professor Roderick McGillis, who, as editor of *The Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, remarked in 1988 that a proper *childhood* reading creates questioning *adults* [*ibid.*, 13]. So we see how successive little, but significant, steps progressing from reading, decoding and

encoding, via discussing, communicating and sharing, to analysing and critiquing, lead to something big, rich and complex in the long run: independence, autonomy, empowerment and resilience on the part of child readers.

4.6. Issues of multi-, inter- and cross-culturality

As indicated above already, during my guest lecture in Cambridge a number of participants became better aware of the great potential inherent in picture books not only for introducing EFL-learners to a foreign *language*, but also to a foreign / different / other *culture*. Multiculturalism is ideally bound up with multilingualism, but being versatile in several languages is not a necessary presupposition: doubtless one can also learn about other cultures in one's native tongue, through translations, before foreign language acquisition commences. Yet as picture books address the youngest reading audiences, and as English is mostly the first foreign language learned in German schools, an English-speaking picture book is often the very first encounter with *a foreign culture in a foreign tongue* [Bimberg 1999: 291–292]. For non-native speakers these books, originally not intended for them, have an intercultural 'side' effect. In this special case decoding means that the native and familiar together with the foreign, exotic and hitherto unknown elements, need to be decoded and related to the child readers' mostly different life experiences. This is no easy affair. It can be ac-

accompanied by incomprehension or intercultural misunderstandings, but also by an awareness of one's latent prejudices. Heidi Rösch [1997] accentuates that 'self and other' ('das Fremde und das Eigene') are a central category in the intercultural didactics of foreign languages [*ibid.*: 199; Bimberg 2000: 297].

For quite some time already an urge has been felt to represent socio-cultural diversity in children's literature [cf. May 1995: 138ff.; Bimberg 2000: 291]. This interculturality can encompass a wide range of responses, be very superficial, broad and general, but also deep, sustained and complex. Ideally the learners get deeply immersed in the foreign language and culture.

However, the teaching of interculturality has to tackle a number of problems still impacting the whole discourse. These are for instance an uneven international transfer of children's literature and cultural prejudices [O'Sullivan 1997: 96, 99, 101; Bimberg 2000: 294], national boundaries of children's literature [Nikolajeva 1996: 9, 27, 30, 34–37, 43; Bimberg 2000: 294–295], still some amount of eurocentrism, racism or nationalism [Martini 1994: 96; Bimberg 2000: 295], misrepresentations of culture in old and new books [Anderson 2002: 177].

Consequently, a consciousness of the correlation between 'self' and other' when approaching a foreign culture [cf. Kramer 1999: 49; Bimberg 2000: 295–296], the dialogical character of intercultural teaching and learning [cf. Bredella and Delanoy 1999: 12–13; Bimberg 2000: 296],

a critical multiculturalism [cf. Hade 1997: 115, 121; Bimberg 2000: 296] and comparing cultural viewpoints [Anderson 2002: 178] are extremely important for teaching inter-, cross- or multiculturalism. Anderson does not only offer a set of categories for classifying different types of multicultural books (culturally neutral / generic / specific books), but also a catalogue of useful questions for evaluating multicultural literature [*ibid.*: 173–175]. Heidi Rösch already attempted similar things in a German publication five years earlier. Her book categories include picture books about the foreign / foreign parts of the world, picture books from foreign countries / abroad, and picture books of migration literature. This is rounded off by concluding criteria of analysis [*ibid.*: 17–26].

That children's and picture books can significantly contribute to multilingualism and multiculturalism has been proved sufficiently by now – provided that certain presuppositions are created for successful teaching, learning and communicating:

- a critical attitude towards race, class, gender, power, status, and language
- the creative use of literary criticism: employment of open, critical and varied approaches
- stimulation of the children's active role in the reading process, the sharing and communicating of joint / mutual experiences
- the experience of the creative power of

literature

- the experience that literature is personally meaningful (Bimberg 2000, 298)

5. Conclusion

As all these observations have hopefully shown, teaching intermediality through (English-speaking) picture books is an extremely complex and demanding, but also very stimulating affair. A student who has successfully moved through this rich and ambitious programme in tertiary education, the successive stages of creating awareness, skills and competences in decoding and encoding, has become a true semiotician. He / she is likely to never enter the children's section of a book shop as a naïve or innocent reader any more. He / she can be trusted with judging competently, with selecting and using picture books in very many different, creative, but also critical, yet always encouraging and stimulating ways. It is no exaggeration to say: the cultural literacy of the next generations depends on this competence!

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A SPECIAL CASE OF INTERMEDIALITY: INTERANIMATION OF TEXT AND PICTURES IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING PICTURE BOOKS

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Abstract. The focus of this essay is on a special case of intermediality: the interanimation of text and pictures in English-speaking picture books. Producing readings, constructing meaning, encoding and decoding at two levels of signification and communication – verbal and visual representation – are the essential activities looked into. Picture books as fascinating products at the intersection of literature and art are conducive to multiple effects, purposes and functions. Especially when aiming to competently select and creatively use picture books with child readers, various aspects and areas of expertise need to be considered: Children's Literature Studies; literacy development; semiotics; book illustration; didactics; and, interculturality. So we take a broad approach to the complex issue and discuss it from a variety of different perspectives, stressing the interdisciplinary character of the subject, the cross-over between Literary Studies, Linguistics, Fine Arts, Educational Theory, Didactics and Cultural Studies.

Key words: intermediality, picture books, interanimation of text and pictures, verbal and visual representation, iconotext, children's literature, literacy development, semiotics, book illustration, didactics, interculturality.

