

Picture books and critical literacy: using multimodal interaction analysis to examine children's engagements with a picture book about war and child refugees

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Abstract

In this paper, we explore how a group of 10 and 11-year-old primary school children engage with a picture book about a refugee boy from Somalia. As we examine in some detail a video-recording of the children's discussion, we suggest that the children's emotional engagement with the story was pivotal to not only their making sense of the book but to their critical discussion of the issues the story raised. The discussion we report on here was part of a wider project to examine the use of picture books for critical literacy in schools.

Critical literacy is often discussed as a rational endeavour, where children are invited to ask analytical questions about the message a text seeks to communicate and the means by which this is achieved. Following others, for example Anwarrudin (2016), who have challenged this focus on rationalism, we explore the role of emotions in our session. Our data shows that the children's critical-analytical discussions of the story were closely connected with their

emotional engagement. We use Norris' (2004) multimodal interaction analysis to examine the children's emotional and embodied engagement with the book and its story. This analysis of the children's words, gestures, posture, gaze and voice quality reveals the complexity of their reactions to the book and specifically the role of 'emotional collisions' (Kuby 2012, p. 35) in provoking embodied and affective reactions but also intellectual curiosity and 'critical engagement' (Johnson and Vasudevan 2012, p. 35). With regards to the role of picture books in critical literacy pedagogy, our paper offers teachers new insights into what processes of thinking, feeling and communicating they can expect to be part of critical literacy lessons.

Introduction

In this paper, we discuss findings from an action research project¹ aiming to understand how picture books can be used to promote critical literacy for primary school children (Roche, 2015; Serafini, 2012). Critical literacy uses texts about social and political topics to support children's detailed examinations of the ideas these texts include and how these ideas are presented (Luke, 2012). In the project, a teacher and the first author organised fortnightly discussion sessions with groups of children in years 5 and 6 (9 to 11-year olds). In one of these sessions, we discussed 'The Colour of Home', by Mary Hoffman and Karin Littlewood. First published in 1992, this book tells the story of Hassan, a Somalian refugee boy recently arrived in Britain and struggling to settle in. On his first day at school, he paints a picture for

his teacher showing his colourful home in Somalia, before adding dark flames, guns and bullets to show the events that led to his family's flight, including the death of his uncle. The next day, a Somali translator helps Hassan to tell his teacher about the painting, and his experiences before arriving in Britain. Hassan then paints a new picture of his home in Somalia, full of colour, which his family hangs in their new house in Britain, reflecting Hassan's new hope and interest in his new home and life. The story is accompanied by half and full-page vibrant watercolour illustrations.

In this paper, we address two questions that arose in the context of our project. Firstly, what can an analysis of the children's use of non-spoken communicative modes, captured on video, tell us about how children engaged with a lesson that was intended to support critical literacy? And, secondly, what is the role of emotions in critical literacy discussions? Implicit in both these questions is an interest in exploring the potential of multimodal analysis for understanding classroom discussions and critical literacy (Norris, 2004, 2014; Bourne & Jewitt, 2003).

Classroom interactions, meaning-making and multimodality

Our paper draws on socio-cultural understandings of learning, based on L.S. Vygotsky (1978). This perspective asserts that meaning is constructed through engagement between members of a learning context (see Mercer, 2008). Meaning-making, therefore, is not a purely cognitive process situated in the individual's mind but is nourished by interactions with others and by the ideas we are exposed to when interacting with materials such as books.

While talk is central to learning in schools, classroom discourse is always multimodal including for example gestures, body posture and gaze (see for example Flewitt, 2006). A number of concepts have been used to capture the multimodality of meaning-making in classrooms, for example 'multimodal ensembles' (Bourne & Jewitt, 2003, p.65; see also Flewitt, 2006, p. 28), or multimodal layering (Walsh and Simpson, 2014). For the purpose of our study, we draw on Sigrid Norris' framework (2004) of multimodal interaction analysis and we explain further below how we made use of this framework.

Critical literacy

Researchers commonly understand critical literacy to be a practice that involves readers carefully examining how texts are constructed, which perspectives they present, which ones they exclude and what effects authors seek to create on the reader (Comber, 2015; Janks, 2013, 2014). According to Luke (2012), critical literacy aims to bring topics relating to power and social justice into the classroom. Our project draws on these aims of critical literacy, applying them to work with picture books (see Roche 2015). We chose books on topics such as gender relations, environmental concerns or, as in the session examined here, war.

Studies looking into how teachers can support critical literacy among children and young people often use multimodal texts, for example magazines or picture books, and some have used video-recordings. But the analysis of the children's responses to these texts often privileges their talk (see for example Lysaker & Sedberry, 2015; Roche, 2015; Swain, 2010) or it examines children's drawing or writing in response to books (Arizpe, Bagelman, Devlin, Farrell, & McAdam, 2014). Video recording has been used alongside linguistic analysis in

research examining students' responses to and critical engagement with a digital and non-digital version of a story (Simpson & Walsh, 2015). Video-based research on literacy lessons where visual data has been a focus of analysis has proved fruitful, showing the importance of different modes, including gesture, as part of children's reading practices and meaning making (Simpson, Walsh, & Rowsell, 2013), although the texts used as part of this analysis were websites, rather than picture books. The little video-based research specifically focussed on picture books has not examined the specific visual data that the film captures (see for example, Kim & Cho, 2017; Mantei & Kervin, 2015).

Critical literacy, emotions and embodiment

In a recent paper, Sardar M. Anwaruddin (2016) argues that critical literacy research and practice tends to focus on 'rationalism' (Anwaruddin, 2016, p. 381). Echoing this view, Candace R. Kuby points out that the kind of questions critical literacy typically asks 'focus on rational, analytical readings of texts' (2012, p. 32) and that in school contexts, the 'emotional force' (Kuby, 2012, p. 32) of texts seems to be ignored. Learning, however, Anwaruddin (2016) suggests, is always an emotional endeavour. That texts (fictional and non-fictional) speak to readers not only as 'analysts' but seek an emotional reaction from us is of course not a new idea (see Rosenblatt, 1978). Emotions, however, may be seen as distracting from or impeding the kind of rational-analytical lens that critical literacy promotes (Janks, 2002; Lewis & Tierney, 2011).

Recent research into embodiment, affect and literacies offers new perspectives for research and pedagogy in the field of literacy and critical literacy. Affect here captures bodily reactions – being affected – by something (Ehret, Boegel, & Manuel-Nekouei, 2018). This perspective opens up a view of literacy, as taught and learned in schools and beyond, as ‘evoking and compelling embodied responses that cannot be captured by rationality alone’ (Ehret and Leander, 2019, p.3). That learning is an affective process has also been emphasized by Walsh and Simpson (2014), who analysed video recordings of literacy lessons where children used iPads. Related to the role of affect, their findings also highlight the important of gesture and touch in the children’s meaning making.

Concerning critical literacy specifically, Johnson and Vasudevan (2012) invite researchers and teachers to recognise and examine how children and young people use their bodies to share critical views on texts. They argue that critical literacy’s ‘verbo- and logo-centricity’ (Johnson and Vasudevan, 2012, p.35) means that such engagement, which they describe as performances, may not always be recognised as critical literacy by teachers and researchers (see also Enriquez, 2016). In a similar perspective, Wohlwend and Lewis (2011, p. 189) argue that critical literacy needs to be thought of as including ‘critical distance and immersion, a process both analytical and playful, resistant and emotional’. In this paper, we draw on the ideas proposed by Wohlwend and Lewis (2011), and Johnson and Vasudevan (2012), in the context of critical literacy work with picture books.

To further allow us to understand the role of emotions in critical literacy work, we used Kuby’s concept of ‘emotional collision’ (2012, p. 35). Kuby uses ‘collision’ as a metaphor to explain how emotions arise when ‘unexpected interactions’ take place (2012, p. 35). She

refers to interactions between people. We use her idea to think about collisions as moments when a specific idea or expectation comes upon another idea that in the context of the discussion is experienced to be significant. Such collisions provoke emotions. We use this idea to understand the way the children reacted to aspects of the book and the story it narrates.

Methodology

The session we analyse in this paper is part of an action research project conducted over the spring and summer of 2017 in a primary school in the North West of England. In the project, a teacher (the school's deputy head teacher, Ms. R) and the first author (Uta) offered fortnightly reading and discussion sessions, for children in years 5 and 6. They used picture books to engage groups of 10-14 children in topics such as animal welfare, gender, and war. The books had been chosen jointly by Ms. R and Uta. Our main criterion was to identify books with themes likely to invite critical discussions. Critical literacy is not promoted by England's national curriculum. Children in year 6 have to sit statutory literacy and numeracy tests and these tests partly shape the curriculum. Our lessons were offered in addition to the regular English lessons. Prior to each lesson, Uta and Ms. R identified a number of questions and themes to use as prompts. However, we did not follow a detailed lesson plan nor did we aspire to cover all aspects of critical literacy. The second author, Emily, was not involved in the data collection, but joined the project for the data analysis and writing of this paper.

The school is a small primary school located outside of a medium-sized city in the North of England. The children's attainment is above the national average. The number of children for

whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is below average. The sessions, which took place in the hall or the dining area, lasted between 50 to 70 minutes. We always had two copies of the book held by Ms R. and Uta so that everybody could see the text and images.

In this paper, we examine the video- and audio-recording of one session, taking place in June 2017, and involving 10 children from the year 6 class. All of the children had English as their first or main language. The parents of two of the children had come to England in their own youth or to study, but the children were born in England. Our faculty's research ethics committee approved the study. All names of children used in the data extracts below are pseudonyms. When Uta first met the children, she explained why she wanted to record the sessions. While the sessions were part of their regular lessons and not optional, she sought the children's assent to the recordings. One child did not want to be filmed, while others who were initially happy to be recorded later asked to be excluded. The use of just one camera allowed us to change the position of the tripod to respond to the children's changing views on being filmed. The session we analyse in this paper (a 52-minute video-recording) includes 10 children, seven of who were captured on film. Data analysis focussed on our repeated viewings of the video.

In our analysis, we drew on Norris' (2004) multimodal interaction analysis. This approach allowed us to look holistically at the verbal and non-verbal aspects of our participants' communication as part of their interactions as a group, without any one communicative mode being privileged over the others (Norris, 2004; 2011). The focus of multimodal interaction analysis is on what individuals express through a communicative mode (Norris,

2004). Following Norris (2004), we understood a communicative mode to be any system of representation with a communicative function in a particular context. We focussed on seven non-verbal communicative modes in our transcription and analysis (spoken language, proxemics / distance, posture, gesture, head movement, gaze, and voice quality), which were chosen because they stood out as crucial modes in the children's meaning making in our data. We expanded Norris' (2004) outline of communicative modes to include voice quality, thinking about how changes in the suprasegmental aspects of speech, such as pitch, loudness, and phonation type (e.g. breathy voice) were being used to communicate (Podesva, 2007).

In order to analyse all the communicative modes in unison, we produced multimodal transcripts of key extracts of the data, with video stills captured to illustrate the non-verbal modes. These multimodal transcripts were produced following Norris' (2004) protocol, with the recording being watched multiple times and attention being focussed on the different communicative modes in turn. From the resulting multimodal transcripts, we developed what we termed 'interactional scores' (see Tables 1-5, below), drawing on the idea of a music score, and the gestural scores used in articulatory phonetics (e.g. Browman and Goldstein, 1992). These interactional scores allowed us to see how the communicative modes were ordered and used simultaneously by the children (Norris, 2020). They were analysed in conjunction with the video data, to ensure that the meaning of the whole was not lost through a focus on the part.

In the following sections, we examine several moments in the children's discussion of 'The Colour of Home'. The journal article format does not allow a complete analysis of the lesson.

The moments we chose illustrate the role of emotions throughout the lesson and we discuss these in relation to what these show about critical literacy.

The children's initial reactions to the book: the prominent role of emotions

Following on from a brief discussion of the book's cover, Ms R read the book to us. In line with how we had designed the session, she then asked the children for their initial thoughts. Anna (see Figure 1 below, the girl at the back, wearing glasses), in a soft voice, arms folded as if hugging herself said:

Anna: I think he's a refugee.

Ms R: A refugee.

Anna: Yeh.

Ms R: Ella (the tall girl on the left side of the, wearing a hooded sweater)

Ella: I think it's kind of like, he was kind of like, it was because you didn't wouldn't expect it cos you know. It's just like meant to be like a kids book, because like you wouldn't expect it, cos like all the guns and what, like a child has never experienced.

Ms R: It's quite shocking isn't it?

Ella: Yeh.

Ms R: Cos you see those pictures and you think it's a book for little children. It's quite shocking. Alfred?

Alfred (not on the camera): It was sad. (He stresses sad, with a long vowel).

Uta: Mm, yeh. It is sad, isn't it?

In the above excerpt, Anna, Ella and Alfred share their initial reactions to the book. While Anna's contribution appears to be a mere statement capturing the key theme of the book, her

soft voice and protective arms reveal her emotions. Following on from Anna, Ella talks about the surprise she experienced while listening.

Below, figure 1 is a screenshot of the moment where Alfred said that the book was sad.

Figure 1 While Alfred Speaks

<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>

In the above screenshot, nearly all of the children hold their arms close to their body in gestures that seem to be protective or soothing. Ms R picks up on the emotional intensity of this moment:

Ms R: Is there anybody else got anything to say about how it made them feel? You said shocked and sad-

James: Yeh.

Ms R: Go on, James (the boy on the left, in the striped shirt, on Ella's left)

James: It was like [pause] I thought like he was [pause] just happy and then suddenly the teacher said like, that's lovely and he carried on painting and just smudged everything and then made red paint on it.

In the above extract, James is retelling part of the story from the book, referring to the scene where Hassan turns his peaceful looking painting of his home in Somalia into a picture depicting the violence of war, the illustration showing Hassan smearing black and red paint all over his picture. Whilst narrating this part of the story, James uses multiple communicative modes, which Norris (2004) calls a 'multimodal ensemble'. Below, in Table 1, we offer a detailed score of the communicative modes James uses in parts of his intervention. We chose this brief extract because it shows how he marks the sudden change in the book's

narrative with a sudden change in his body language, coinciding with his use of the word “suddenly”.

Table 1 Multimodal score of parts of James’ intervention

<INSERT TABLE 1 HERE>

Looking at James’ spoken words in isolation, they could be interpreted as James communicating his understanding of the narrative, in a move towards critical analysis as expected in classroom discussion of literature. The multimodal score, however, shows the strength of his emotions, captured in his embodied response (Ehret and Leander, 2019), and this shows his ‘investment’ (Kuby 2012, p. 40) in the story and the topics it raises.

As James’ contribution continues, his embodied reactions continue to convey his emotional reaction to the story. Whilst describing Hassan’s smudging of the painting, James replicates this smudging using an iconic beat gesture, moving his right fist from side-to-side five times with increasing speed, as if he was smudging the table below him. During this description, James’ voice becomes quieter and softer, and he moves away from being close to the table, and within the inner circle of the group, to being further away from the table and on the edge of the group (see figure 2 below) The slow rate of his speech, with pauses, highlights the emotional intensity of his intervention. While speaking, he looks back and forth between Ms R and Uta (sitting on his left). We interpret James’ movement as a kind of distancing himself from the unexpected turn of the story and the combination of his voice with his looking towards us – with an expression that signals concern - supports this. Towards the

end his words were barely audible so that Ms R had to ask what he had said. Still speaking very softly he said:

It's like, whoah, what's going on.

Figure 2 While James Talks

<INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE>

The above extracts of the children's discussion, the stills from the video, and the multimodal score show examples of 'emotional collisions' (Kuby, 2012, p.35). An initial and significant collision happened early on in the session, when Ms R had finished reading the book: this was between what the children had expected the book to be about and what it actually was about. Before reading the book, the group had briefly looked at its cover. The cover itself is dominated by bright and cheerful colours showing Hassan and his mother smiling, suggesting a happy story. And, yet, as Ella says above, it turned out to be a very different kind of book. The book too includes a collision: the picture that Hassan paints showing his peaceful home in Somalia is smudged over with black and red paint. This is the collision that James reacts to in the above scene. These collisions, as Kuby (2012) suggest, provoke embodied and affective reactions. The strength of these reactions shows the children's investment in the story. That investment, we will see later, is not limited to expressions of emotions but intertwined with the children's intellectual curiosity and critical explorations of the book's themes.

Following on from James, another boy, Peter (on the right side of the picture, at the front, see figure 3 below), shares his feelings.

Peter: A little bit angry that the people do that, like to his home and they forced him out of where he lives. And it's just wrong that people do that.

Figure 3 While Peter Talks

<INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE>

Peter verbally names his emotion, but he also uses his arms and hands to convey his reaction to Hassan's story. The multimodal score below (see table 2 below) shows this.

Table 2 Multimodal score of Peter's contribution

<INSRERT TABLE 2 HERE>

In the above turn, Peter expresses his emotion in the face of the book's content, but his words also reveal his attending to the moral issue the story raises, as he seeks to understand why people would be forced out of their home. His move forwards on the table is an inviting move (Norris, 2004), addressed to the group and specifically to Ms R towards whom he leans, seeking her attention. While talking about his 'anger', he holds one hand in front of his mouth, making a fist, fingers moving from loose to tight, pressed against each other and his mouth, as seen in figure 3 and table 3. This is an unusual gesture. A fist connotes power or battle, so we interpret Peter's gesture as an expression of his anger, which is stronger than his words ('a little bit') suggest. His voice is creaky, as if he was slightly struggling to produce the words. Like James earlier, his voice is also small, in particular towards the end, and it is difficult to hear him.

In the second part of the sentence (see table 2, above), the gesture of the fist turns to what appears to be a self-soothing movement, stroking his face. We interpret this as a sign of his grappling with the moral issue of violence towards a child, that provokes anger but also a feeling of being uncomfortable and perhaps scared. Peter's words may not be recognized as critical literacy because he does not offer a detailed analytical comment on war or on how the book talks about war and violence. But Peter's intervention shows him taking a critical stance towards the key theme of the book (war) and looking at his words, gestures and body posture, as detailed in the multimodal score, we get an understanding of the strength and complexity of Peter's engagement with the book. Ms R recognizes the strength of Peter's engagement. She moves her head and body towards him, gazing at him while he speaks, her face showing concern.

Looking across the extracts we have shown so far, we can see that emotions are a prominent part of the children's interaction. The children display a range of emotions including surprise and shock, anger, and fear. These emotions reveal their close engagement with the story and their empathy as they retell and almost relive parts of what happened to Hassan, as shown in their embodied reactions. Overall, in this phase of the discussion, we see primarily closeness. But analytical and critical viewpoints also emerge, for example in Ella's comment about the book not being like other 'kid's books' and, a little later, in Peter's contribution. We can see here confirmed what Wohlwend and Lewis (2011) suggest about the presence of closeness and emotions in critical literacy discussions.

Engaging critically with the book's main theme: seeking to understand why people go to war

About 20 minutes into the session, the children turn their attention onto the war that is alluded to in the book. Anna begins this discussion with the following intervention:

Anna: It's like, I want to know more [emphasis] now, like why did they kill his uncle, and who, er why. It's just kind of, it does explain it but not fully. So it kind of makes you want to know, like more of what happened.

In the above, Anna invites us to probe into the context of the war in Somalia and the reasons why Hassan's uncle was killed. Anna here suggests a move towards analysis, not so much of the book and how it is constructed, but of the theme it tackles. This is part of the goals of critical literacy (Luke, 2012). Table 3, below, shows the multimodal score of parts of Anna's intervention.

Table 3 Multimodal score of parts of Anna's intervention

<INSERT TABLE 3 HERE>

Looking at score in table 3, we can see that Anna makes an opening movement with her right arm, an inviting gesture (Norris, 2004), addressed to all of us. While talking she looks at Ms R, seeking contact, inviting a reaction. Anna's voice is clear and loud. Her hand gesture, with the left arm stretched out on the table, towards the group, further emphasizes the invitation that her words implicitly convey (Norris, 2004). Looking specifically at the nature of her gestures, gaze, posture, and words in table 3 and comparing these with tables 1 and 2, we see a different kind of intensity here in Anna's engagement with the book. Driven by a desire to

tackle in more depth the story, she moves beyond the initial need to share surprise, shock and anger to the children, tackling in more depth some of the complex content of the book.

Following on from Anna's intervention, the children's talk moves indeed towards a closer discussion of questions of war. Below is an extract from the discussion that developed shortly after Anna's remark.

Ella: Yeh, I think that they should stop fighting. There's no point.

James : It's not going to get you anywhere, is it?

Ella: No, it's not like you're going to get anywhere, cos everyone's just going to keep retaliating and say, no, and then they're just going to go fighting and everyone's going to be fighting and there's just no point.

Child: [??]

Ella: There's just no point.

Ms R.: Right, Anna?

Anna: We're all humans at the end of the day, and it's like why? You don't need to.

Child: No.

Anna:-You can just stop.

[Uta explains the concept of civil war and shares what she knows about the situation in Somalia.]

Luke: It's just that really, nobody ever wins war, like-

Uta: No.

Children: No.

Anna: That's a good point.

Alfred:-so there's no point. So basically you're just hurting people.

James: There is never a winner in wars.

Anna: No.

The above extract illustrates how the book, in the way we had hoped, generates critical literacy discussion. The children talk about war and its effects on people and yet, the paradox of humans fighting against each other. The discussion is both analytical and philosophical, illustrating the kind of thinking that critical literacy aims to support. The earlier parts of the sessions, where emotional collisions provoked strong reactions to the book, were a necessary and useful part of the session. It is partly because the book and its themes spoke to the children at an emotional level that they were keen to discuss it further and to engage in the critical analysis we can see in the above extract. Following Kuby, we argue that their emotions, arising from collisions, are 'productive' (Kuby 2012, p.40), supporting their analysis of the book and its themes. Overall, this confirms arguments by other researchers (Anwaruddin, 2016; Johnson and Vaseduvan, 2012; Wohlwend and Lewis, 2011) that emotions have a role to play in critical literacy. As we could see in the children's embodied responses, emotions are closely connected to the more analytical engagement with the book's theme that the above extracts illustrate. It is important to note that a move towards an analytical gaze, as illustrated in Anna's contribution, does not mean that the children's talk is now devoid of affect but that its kind and quality is changing. For example, Anna's score does not show shock or sadness, but curiosity and desire to engage, as in her 'wanting to know'.

Discussing authorial and illustrational choices

In addition to talking about war, at different points in the session, the children discussed the book at a more meta-level, in relation to authorial and illustrational choices. For example, while the group still talked about war, Ella offered the following comment:

On the thing that is a children's book, like other books that we've read, like the piggy book, like it tells a message, but in a kind of a fun way, unlike this one.

Ella's words indicate another collision. In earlier sessions with this group, while the topics we looked at were serious (e.g. gender roles), the books we used had tackled these topics with humour and satire. Above, Ella comments on our discussion of Anthony Browne's 'Piggybook'. Table 4 below shows a multimodal score of Ella's contribution.

Table 4 Ella compares 'The Colour of Home' with 'Piggybook'

<INSERT TABLE 4 HERE>

Ella's contribution shows her thinking, implicitly, about the author and illustrator's choices in terms of how to present the story. While talking, Ella initially uses a beat-like gesture with her finger, then puts her hands together in a prayer-like gesture, arms stretched forwards towards the middle of the table around which we sit. Her posture, gaze and arm movements are inviting attention, addressed primarily to Ms. R here. The clarity of her voice together with her hand movement add emphasis to her words (Norris, 2004).

Following on from Ella's intervention, Uta seeks to raise the children's interest in Hassan's paintings, to encourage examination of the author and illustrator's use of colours in the book:

[...] why are there so many colours and why are all the pictures so colourful?

Prompted by Uta's suggestion, from this point onwards the children examine what the different colours in the book may mean and how the illustrator has used them to express Hassan's perspective. Referring to the page where Hassan tells the teacher that in his new country for him everything is grey and brown, unlike in Somalia where there is much more colour, Luke explains:

I think because it's grey, it's like he's – it's nothing to do with him first, I think it's cos that's the bit where it's his, like, he's telling us his point of view. So he thinks like everything is really grey. Like that's how he sees it. [...]

James adds:

Um, kind of following Luke kind of makes sense, cos look he's saying, oh no, this grey's just brown. On the other point of view, it's full of colours.

James points to the book while speaking, drawing out attention to the page he refers to, shown in Figure 4. Table 5 shows the multimodal score of parts of his intervention.

Figure 4 James pointing at a page in the book

<INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE>

Table 5 James' comment on the colours in the book

<INSERT TABLE 5 HERE>

James and Luke carefully analyse the illustrator and author's use of colour and words to express the protagonist's point of view. As we can see from Table 5, while James speaks, his voice is clear and without hesitation, unlike in his earlier interventions (see Table 1). He repeatedly points to the book and his gaze, shifting from book to Ms R, invites her to follow him in his analysis of the page in the book he is talking about. His intervention, which is drawing on the book as textual reference, emphasizes the analytical stance he takes here. Although neither he, nor the other children, refer directly to the author and illustrator, they engage in critical analysis of authorial choices. They discuss the illustrator's use of pictures and, specifically, colour to bring Hassan's perspective and experience to the forefront, engaging in critical literacy as envisaged by Hilary Janks and other critical literacy researchers.

We ended the session by inviting the children to look at the final pages of the book and to think about what in the book seems to suggest that Hassan is going to be happy in his new school and country. This was a deliberate attempt to end our discussion on a positive note.

Discussion

The above screenshots and extracts offer an insight into how a group of schoolchildren engaged with the 'The Colour of Home', a picture book about a young refugee from Somalia. Over the course of the session, the children tackled several topics raised by the book. They expressed a range of emotions including dismay about the protagonist's fate and anger about

the war that had forced his family to flee. They expressed their emotions verbally and through non-verbal communicative modes. Overall, the tone was mostly sombre and serious, specifically in the initial parts of the session.

Ms R and Uta were aware of these affective responses to the book and sought to affirm the children's contributions by repeating their comments or by inviting other children to share their emotions. Given the sensitivity of the topic, it was important that the children could engage with it in their own way and we did not steer the conversation in a tight way. They did, however, as seen above, suggest specific lines of analysis and they supported the children's discussion of the book and its themes by offering information about the issues it addressed.

The project's main finding is that the children's affective and embodied reactions were an important element of their critical engagement with the book. Attending to the multimodality of the children's discussions made visible the emotional aspects of the children's talk, captured not only by what they said but also by the quality of their voices, how they were holding their bodies, their gestures and their gaze.

Collisions, for example between what the children thought the world should be like (i.e. peaceful) and what the book told them about the presence of war, provoked verbal and non-verbal expressions of emotions. These emotions were particularly strong in the first 20 minutes of the discussion. At the same time, and more prominently as the discussion went on, these emotions supported 'deep thinking' (Roche, 2015) about some of the issues the book touched upon, for example, questioning the morality of violence. Later in the session,

the discussion moved to a focus on the choices author and illustrator made. Supporting readers in examining authorial choices is another important goal of critical literacy.

Overall, the findings confirm what Lysaker and Sedberry (2015) have suggested. Working with picture books about racial and cultural differences, Lysaker and Sedberry highlight that children's emotional engagement with the characters was pivotal for their discussion of social justice issues. Emotions, they argue, allow 'social imagination' (Lysaker and Sedberry, 2015, p. 110) to develop and this supports comprehension (of the story) as well as children addressing the moral issues the books raised. Our findings also confirm Wohlwend and Lewis' (2011) perspective, i.e. that closeness and distance, emotions and analysis, are part and parcel of critical literacy, and closely intertwined. Both distance and immersion were present in our discussion. For example, when the children talked about how Hassan smudging over his picture, they were closely 'immersed' in his experience. The book is intended to engage readers emotionally, as the author, Mary Hoffman explained (see Hope, 2018, p. 309).

Looking at the moments in the discussion that we have captured in the above data extracts, we agree with Kuby (2012, p. 35), who suggests that we should look at emotions arising in classroom discussions 'as a way to mediate understanding of social injustices'. The multimodal scores reveal the degree of the children's 'investment' in the discussion (Kuby 2012, p. 39). It is reasonable to assume that if the book had not 'spoken' to them at an emotional level, such investment would not have occurred, and the more critical-analytical lens would not have emerged.

Overall, then, our findings underscore the argument made by many others, i.e. that critical literacy includes and requires emotions and aesthetic engagement with a text such as a picture book. Understandings of critical literacy, as Johnson and Vasudevan (2012, p.34) suggest, need to extend beyond the 'verbo- and logo-centric' to consider affect and embodiment as elements of 'critical engagement' (Johnson and Vasudevan, 2012, p.35) with a book. Peter's contribution (see table 2 above) is an example of such engagement.

Multimodal interaction analysis of the video data played an important role in developing our findings. The children's embodied reactions to the book are only partly captured in the transcripts of their verbal exchange. Attending in detail to the children's gestures or their body language, we could see how emotions and affect supported their critical-analytical discussions.

Methodological challenges and conclusions

Before offering our conclusions, we briefly comment on the methodological challenges we experienced. The use of only one video-camera limited our ability to film all listeners and to fully capture the interactions occurring between everybody in our group. On the other hand, this decision also allowed us to respect the children's wishes about appearing on camera.

The use of multimodal scores was time-intensive and not all data could be presented. These scores afforded detailed analysis, however, showing the multimodality of the children's emotional reactions.

Despite these challenges, our project offers teachers and researchers insights into the role of emotions in critical literacy. Our experience suggests that teachers who want to implement critical literacy in primary schools should be attentive to expressions of emotions. Unlike what Janks seems to suggest (2002), critical literacy pedagogy should not be seen as threatened by children's emotional reactions to texts. In practical terms, this means paying attention to and giving space to emotions, by being active listeners, and by ensuring that the children's affective engagements are valued as productive parts of the lesson.

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