Grænsegængere og grænsedragninger i nordiske modersmålsfag

Redaktion
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Udgivet som e-publikation 2020 af Syddansk Universitetsforlag og Nordisk Netværk for Modersmålsdidaktisk Forskning.

Forfattere
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Grafisk design
Leif Glud Holm

E-publikationen er en open access-udgivelse og foreligger på Syddansk Universitetsforlags hjemmeside.

Forsidens illustration
Manipuleret foto (ved David Binzer) af Jørn Larsens værk: *320 Labyrint IV - Diffundering* (u.d.).

Mange tak til Inge Lindemark, enke efter Jørn Larsen, for generøst og vederlagsfrit at have stillet billedet til rådighed.

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Indhold

Tracking and mentoring semogenesis in boundary students

af Mary Macken-Horarik

Abstract

This chapter explores acts of meaning by students traditionally relegated to the dustbin in institutionally valorized assessment practices in school English. It takes up a social semiotic perspective on the spoken, written and multimodal responses of students whose texts often alienate teachers, 'making strange' their attempts to produce successful students who are well-prepared for cultural demands of life beyond the school. In this chapter, I look at the fate of students whose forms and processes of meaning making (semogenesis) often escape and certainly resist serious attention from educators and result in low grades and alienation from disciplinary learning. I then ask: What might educators (and indeed semioticians) be missing in their dismissal of texts that confound or ignore disciplinary norms? What might be the result of a shift in perspective (even if just in imagination), attending closely to student texts that fall short of expectations? Could the work of boundary students refresh, even renew, habitual ways of thinking – not just about 'them' but about disciplinary learning more broadly?

Introduction – challenges facing boundary students in Australia

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Michel de Certeau argues that in everyday life, people without power lack access to control over what happens to them. In the face of institutional practices, they resort to adaptive practices to manage the limits imposed on them by the powerful. If a city planning authority determines the design of a civic space, people who inhabit this space find shortcuts, areas for impromptu soccer games, routes to places they want to get to that cut out the main street and its traffic. This resourcefulness is also evident in responses by students to institutional practices in L1 education. Their spontaneous gestures, unpremeditated insights and first draft responses are full of quirky potential that teachers often miss in their identification with the official strategies of schooling. Schools are places of power that impose norms on all students, and those without access to discourses of advantage often lose out. But losses also occur for teachers who think only from the perspective of institutional authority and its assumptions about what matters. Attention to learners' tactics as they attempt to manage the regimes of schooling can mean that we miss the potential in their acts of meaning and thus the opportunity to bring them in to school learning in engaging and powerful ways. A change of vantage point enables us to understand challenges facing students on the margins of schooling and the good sense in so-called tactics.

The term 'boundary students' refers to students who are on the edge of school learning, whether by choice or social disadvantage. Boundary students may be cowed by the regimes of classroom pedagogy and fail to read learning cues taken for granted by others. Or they may simply lack interest in what teachers are doing. Many attend remote schools where resources are few and teachers lack support available to their metropolitan peers. A significant proportion of boundary students have literacy or learning difficulties. Boundary students are a heterogeneous group in Australian schools, even if they share a common fate of being relegated to the margins in school learning. If we are to understand the challenges they face in L1 English, we need a socio-semiotic account of their starting points, difficulties *and* the goodness that gets lost if teachers are unable to track their reasoning and foster access to disciplinary knowledges that take them beyond the backstreets described by de Certeau and the tactics needed to survive in such places.

Australia is a country of low equity in terms of educational outcomes, and this impacts significantly the trajectories of Indigenous students and students from low socio-economic status (SES) households. Results from international tests of literacy confirm a pattern of entrenched disadvantage across the country (OECD, 2017; Thomson, Bortoli & Underwood, 2017). In the 2015 PISA test, for example, Indigenous students

achieved an average score of 435 points in tests of reading literacy, which was 71 points (or around two-and-a-third years of schooling) lower than the average score of 506 points achieved by non-Indigenous students (Thomson et al., 2017: p. xxii). Such disparate results for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are not isolated findings. They are reflected in diverging patterns of achievement among children from home environments marked by lower and higher SES. Furthermore, the differences are increasingly evident in later years of schooling. As educational sociologist Richard Teese (2011) argues, poorly educated parents are less able to help their children understand and accomplish reading and writing tasks of increasing complexity. In addition, studies of the learning trajectories of low-SES students reveal that participation in L1 subjects like English becomes more difficult as the cognitive demands of the curriculum increase. Lack of knowledge about language on the part of their teachers only adds to this difficulty (Love & Arkoudis, 2006, 2004; Valdez, Bunch, Snow & Lee, 2005). The demands of abstraction and technicality in different subjects often become the rocks on which many students founder (Christie & Martin, 2007). In all these ways, poor achievement, challenging language demands and declining interest on the part of students pave the way for further failure. The 'Matthew principle' prevails, with rich (educationally advantaged) students profiting from education and poor (educationally disadvantaged) students slipping further and further behind. Students without access to academically demanding literacy practices suffer more as schooling unfolds.

Richard Teese explains this double disadvantage as follows:

> Both the formal architecture of English as a codified school discipline (curriculum as law) and the way English is designed and taught in a school (curriculum as culture) enable advantages of cultural resources, economic power and early and continuous success in school to be applied in the cause of both individual distinction and school distinction. (Teese, 2011, p. 11).

Students who are unable to participate effectively in English as a discipline either resist engaging with its (increasingly) arcane texts and practices or go 'under the radar' and attempt to avoid the scrutiny of teachers who find them difficult to teach. This is not to suggest that boundary students do not want to communicate - to read narratives and respond to them. Rather it is to suggest that their attempts to do so are made difficult if teachers cannot discern stumbling blocks to a rich(er) practice. Sometimes the problem lies in the texts they are asked to read and sometimes with the orientation students bring to the task. But in other cases, researchers investigating their texts are the problem.

In my earlier research, I compared unsuccessful responses to narratives with those evaluated as successful by teacher-examiners and categorized the former as 'tactical readings' (Macken-Horarik, 1996, 2003, 2006; Cranny-Francis, 1996). The unsuccessful written responses shared some common features: they reacted subjectively to striking details in texts, pursued tangential lines of inquiry and appeared to miss the point of tasks and texts. I accepted the grade they were given and judged the responses problematic because they were so 'odd' and so different from A-range texts. In other words, I assumed the position of a linguistic expert who knew what the 'right' reading should be. As a result, my analyses missed the 'good sense' in some non-mainstream responses. They were often full of nascent insight that may have been awkwardly expressed but whose potential needed recognition and extension. This chapter returns to the texts that examiners did not reward to find the intimations of disciplinary potential that, if well-tended, yield rich and sometimes unexpected fruit. It aims to re-read the potential in students' processes of meaning making and offer insights about how this potential can be developed in L1 classrooms.

Unpacking the title of the chapter

The title of the chapter requires unpacking. The first morpheme in the word 'semo-genesis' originates from the Greek 'sema' which can be translated as 'signs' or simply as 'meaning'. The second morpheme – 'genesis' – refers to the origins and growth of meaning. In systemic functional linguistics (SFL), language is interpreted as a semogenic system: a system that creates meaning. Unlike other semiotic systems, like traffic lights, whose meaning potential is fixed, "the meaning potential of language is open-ended: new meanings can be, and often are being, created" (Halliday, 2009, p. 60). In SFL, growth in meanings or semogenesis occurs in three different time frames. In the life of the culture, language evolves in what Halliday calls *phylogenesis*; in the life of the individual, language develops through infancy and childhood into adulthood, senility and death in *ontogenesis*; and in a text, there is unfolding meaning in *logogenesis* (Halliday 2009; Halliday & Webster, 2009, p. 239). In L1 education, we tend to focus on growth in students' capacities to make meaning and direct these capacities towards the horizons outlined in the discipline being taught, whether English, history, geography, biology etc. In all the aforementioned forms of genesis, language grows through interaction with its environment in an eco-social process. Furthermore, linguistic analysis opens windows on students' acts of meaning and the extent to which these acts them in more or less productive directions in L1 learning. In this chapter, I draw on Halliday's theory of logico-semantic meaning to explore the dynamics of students' reasoning processes (Halliday, 2004, p. 363-441). Analysis of clause complexes in students' speech and writing reveals the logic shaping the flow

of meaning in their texts. If L1 English is to be a discipline in which boundary (but actually all) students 'learn how to mean' (Halliday, 1993), then teachers can benefit from linguistic tools that enable them to track and understand semogenesis.

However, linguistics cannot tell us all we need to know about challenges facing boundary students. If all learners make meanings, they do not make them 'just as they please'. The social environment regulates their forms of reasoning, privileging some over others, making some inadmissible. It can be hard for learners to recognize what a context requires, especially if teachers cannot make this explicit. In his reflections on the remodelling of an English curriculum for an unstable social future, Gunther Kress argues that "what we make available to the child is a central factor in what the child will and can do" (Kress, 1995, p. 12). My reference to 'mentoring' in the title of this chapter highlights the vital role of teachers in mentoring semogenesis for students. This role is underscored in the adage associated with Sydney School genre pedagogy – "guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience" (Martin, 1999; Rose & Martin, 2012). The claim I advance here is that if teachers are to mentor students effectively, they must attend to, *and* value, the meanings learners make as they move towards meanings valued in the discipline. Furthermore, many boundary students do not understand the 'game' of schooling and the hidden features of institutional power that make it hard to play if one is on the margins of the system. This socio-cultural disadvantage doubles the importance of effective mentoring by teachers.

Just as boundary students are a heterogeneous group, so too is meaning a multifaceted concept in SFL. Halliday (1978, 2004) argues that utterances are multifunctional: they have a referential function, with messages developed in logically distinctive ways; they have an interactive function; and they have a text-creating function. In a metafunctional perspective, meaning is differentiated, rather like refracted colours of a rainbow. Each text (and each message within a text) communicates meanings about something to someone or other in a text that hangs together. Hence, semogenesis is multi-functional. A recent study of children's picture books identifies the principle of metafunctions as central to the study of meaning:

> One central insight of linguistic theory is the idea that every text realises three kinds of meanings simultaneously, since every text fulfils a threefold purpose. First a text must be about something; it must represent the material and mental world. At the same time, it must enable communicative interaction with others: what is represented must be able to be asserted, queried, commanded, hedged, denied, imbued with feeling, and so on. Thirdly it must make sense in being relevant to previous utterances or to a shared situation. These three fundamental purposes, or 'metafunctions', create three kinds of meaning that are co-present in every instance of text. (Painter, Martin & Unsworth, 2013, p. 7).

This principle has informed much of the work I have done on students' interpretive practices. It was a key tenet in recent research colleagues and I did with teachers and students using Hallidayan 'grammatics' (Halliday, 2002).[1]

In working with students who operate at the margins of schooling, we need to ensure that we have a strong awareness of the semantic character of texts presented for interpretation (logogenesis), the starting points of readers (ontogenesis) and the social context influencing reading practices (phylogenesis). A key challenge for us as researchers is to relate each of these processes to the others. If we can do this, we have a means of helping teachers to understand students' starting points, their current approaches to tasks like reading and the sociocultural factors that impact on these approaches – advantaging some and disadvantaging others.

Catherine Belsey, a leading theorist of interpretation, argues that "reading involves a circulation between social formation, reader and text" (Belsey, 1980/2000, p. 69). In this perspective, learning to read is a social-semiotic process: it is mediated by texts, by an individual's orientation to meaning and by social (including pedagogic) formation shaping a reader's orientation to meaning.

Figure 1 depicts each aspect of reading in terms of semogenesis.
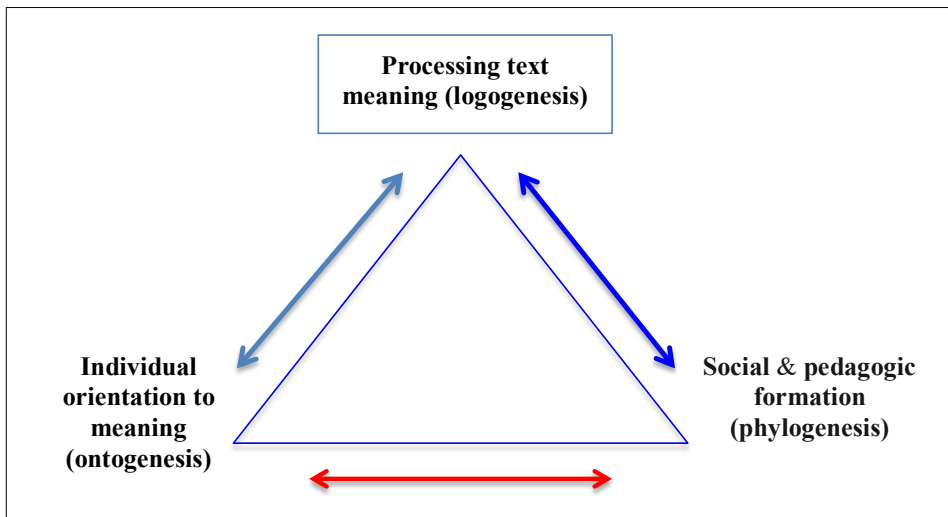
Figure 1: Reading (semogenesis) from a social semiotic perspective.

The remaining sections of this chapter take up this issue, drawing on spoken and written data emerging in the course of research into the conditions shaping develop-ment in students introduced to tools from systemic functional semiotics. Section three introduces 'problem' texts produced by boundary students in response to an enigmatic (and heavily truncated) narrative and a successful text given an A-grade by examiners.

Looked at again, the 'tactical readings' reveal considerable potential, pursuing lines of inquiry invited by the text and seeds of development in the hands of a teacher 'alive' to what students are proposing and knowledgeable about what his or her discipline requires of students.

Section four offers a sociological account of the 'rules' that appear to operate in students' reading practices, drawing on Bernstein's theory of 'recognition' and 'realization rules' (Bernstein, 1990). It interrelates the semiotic and social factors as these influence students' responses and highlights the challenges facing boundary students when it comes to examination tasks.

The fifth section of the paper reports on aspects of the Grammatics project mentioned above which aimed to enhance teacher knowledge about resources for meaning so as to lead development towards semiotic readings and improve achievement for participating students. Here I focus on data from the final year of the project as teachers introduced primary and secondary students to interpretation of multimodal narratives. This picks up on the insight from Kress that children largely take up the resources we make available to them. Explicitness about tools for analysing images is a special feature of this section.

The sixth section presents oral and written responses by boundary students in case study classrooms and the dynamics of their reasoning processes. All students featured reveal striking uptake of their teachers' work with literary picture books and observable shifts from tactical into semiotic readings. I show how dialogic interactions with researchers and teachers enabled students to extend and develop their insights and thus to tap into powerful forms of reasoning about texts – the domain of meta-semiosis.

The final section draws out some implications of the discussion for teachers working with boundary students and highlights the conditions under which creative developments in their interpretive practices are likely to occur.

Reading practices of boundary students – a semiotic view

One enduring feature of examinations in L1 English is an unseen text that examinees must interpret in writing. The narrative considered here is a short story called *The Red-Back Spider* (Board of Studies, 1995)[2]. This text is based on a longer published narrative by Peter Skryznecki (1986) about a migrant boy and his mother clearing weeds in the garden of an Australian woman – Mrs Burnett. Mrs Burnett shows no courtesy to the pair and refuses to let the young boy play with toys he has found while sheltering under her house from the summer sun. In fact, she seems uncaring about the mother's discovery of a dangerous red-back spider in a tin at the bottom of the

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2   The narrative can be found in the appendix, along with the examination question students faced.

garden. The story focuses on the young boy's growing curiosity about why Mrs Burnett behaves as she does and why his mother is so upset. The narrative ends with the sentence 'I knew it was nothing to do with the spider', and the question posed is: What do you think the story is about?' It is a puzzling story made more difficult because the text has a different ending from the original and was heavily truncated to fit the requirements of the examination. This affects intelligibility and the ability of students to make sense of it in their written responses.

The two examples below are typical of those in the lower range of achievement.[3] Because of the length of students' responses, I present only one part of each written text. Response 1 tackles the enigma of Mrs Burnett's actions directly and is presented below as Figure 2.

But I think the story was not about the spider because it was killed. If caught away. The main thing that caught my attention was when Mrs Burnett asked about the toy horse and told him not

to play with the toys. That was the most confusing part of the story when it doesent say why she acted like that. So there must of been something with those toys that he has playing with.

D+ 6

Figure 2: Response 1.

From an everyday perspective, the examination narrative is especially confusing if we ask why any woman would object to a small boy's use of toys relegated to storage under a house. We are simply not told why Mrs Burnett 'acted like that', as Response 1 makes clear. Whilst this reading engaged sensitively with the enigma of the truncated narrative, it fared poorly in the hands of examiners, achieving a mark of only 6 out of 20.

    Response 2 is similarly perceptive and was judged inadequate, marked 5 out of 20. The small excerpt from the essay included below relates the 'lady's actions' to those

3   All spelling and grammar choices are as they were in the originals.

of the spider protecting her young and is actually a plausible reading of the event sequence in the narrative. Although there *are* problems of coherence in the writing, it is a reasonable first draft that pursues a line of reasoning sensitive to the logogenesis of the narrative. Part of the text is reproduced below as Figure 3.
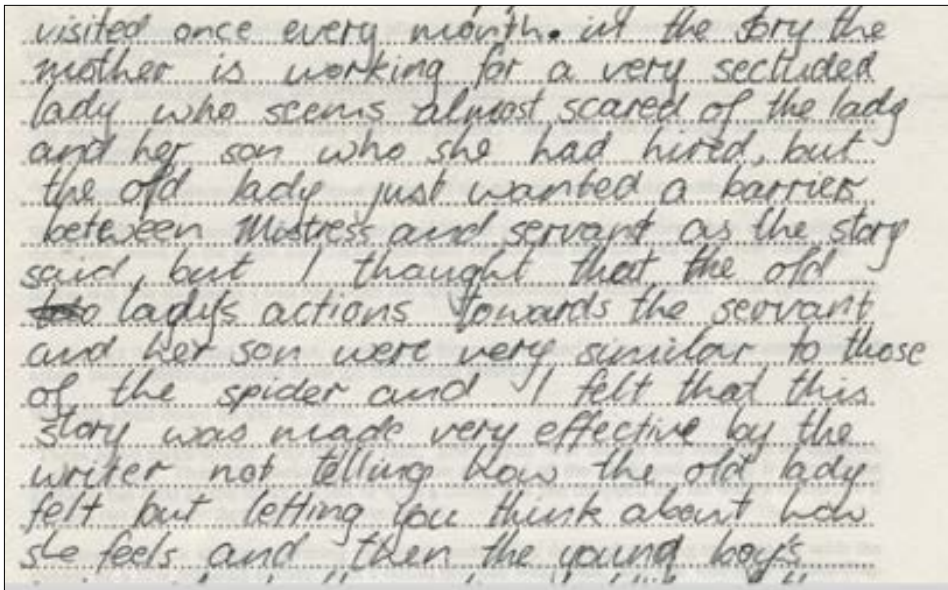
Figure 3: Response 2.

Students who produced texts like these paid a heavy price for their failure to recognize and produce what was (tacitly) required. This is not in the first instance a problem of literacy but of recognition of how to read the text and how to structure the written response. The responses suggest a 'failure' of orientation to task requirements.

What does a linguistic analysis offer educators keen to understand the logic of students' reasoning? One tool within Halliday's logical metafunction is the grammatical resource of Expansion used to develop messages in clause complexes. There are three types of **Expansion** in SFL, akin to mathematical processes of addition, multiplication and equation. In fact, we can use the mathematical symbols to represent each type of Expansion (Halliday, 2004). **Extension** (+) adds meaning to a prior clause using conjunctions like *and, but, or, besides* and *instead of*. This develops early in children's reasoning with the 'and-and' logic a feature of their writing for many years. **Enhancement** (x) expands meanings circumstantially through clauses of time, place, manner or cause and consequence and conjunctions like *when, as, before, after, by, because, if, so, although, even though* and *while*. Causal reasoning is a powerful form in discourses of explanation that feature in disciplinary contexts like history, geography and biology. **Elaboration** (=) reframes messages by reformulating or exemplifying a primary clause. We can reformulate implicitly through use of a colon or explicitly

using conjunctions like *for example, in other words* and *that is to say*. Elaboration is a powerful resource for offering an alternative picture of a phenomenon, making particular aspects more vivid or abstract. It is privileged in contexts like L1 English where students shift gears into symbolic abstraction (Christie, 2010; Macken-Horarik, 2009).

In monitoring students' processes of reasoning, we can turn Expansion into probe questions attuned to the kinds of logic employed by each writer. For example, we can ask: Are students adding information or offering alternatives in an aggregative logic (Extension)? Are they comparing things, giving reasons, situating events in time or space, explaining purposes or consequences in a causal logic (Enhancement)? Are they reformulating, distilling or exemplifying claims in a reframing logic (Elaboration)? Questions like these provide a 'window' on learners' current thinking and launching places for further development.

A second way to develop messages is through **voicing**. In this case, we analyse the 'front' of a clause complex where we often source messages to speakers or thinkers. A key grammatical resource in voicing is **Projection** (Halliday, 2004). Students can project a message using their own voice (e.g. 'I think') or another's voice (e.g. 'S/he thinks'). They can project messages as ideas (thinking) or locutions (saying); they can directly quote or indirectly report wordings. Expansion and Projection can be realized as relations between clauses or embedded within clauses, typically through rank shift. In my work, I notate voicing using the letter 'E' to indicate evaluation and the single quote sign for 'thinking' (E') and double quote sign for saying (E").

Let's return to the earlier student responses and consider their deployment of logico-semantic resources in the course of reasoning about *The Red-Back Spider*. Response 1 reasons about the implications of events in the narrative and why they proceed in this way. The dynamic quality of the student's query about the author's intentions is revealed in Expansion (x, +, =) and Projection (E' or E"). In the text below, I indicate embedding in double square brackets [[…]], following conventions in *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday, 2004, p. 377).

Response 1

> But I think (E') the story was not about the spider (x) because it was killed straight away. The main thing [[that caught my attention]] was (x) [[when Mrs Burnett asked about the toy horse (+) and told him (E") not to play with toys]]. That was the most confusing part of the story (x) when it doesn't say (E") why she acted like that (x). So there must of been something with those toys [[that he was playing with]].

Causal conjunctions like 'because' and 'so' reveal something of the student's inferencing processes. S/he engages with the text on its own terms and tackles the

enigma it presents directly. One can sense the press of the student's mind as s/he struggles to understand the actions of Mrs Burnett. Ironically, it is an insight directly relevant to the published version of the narrative, which reveals that Mrs Burnett is indeed hiding a child inside the house who is unable to play with the toys that the young boy wants to borrow. The student has insightfully tracked the issue inherent in the narrative even if this is not rewarded by the examiner.

The second response also tracks the unfolding meaning of the narrative (its logogenesis), but this is oriented to characters' feelings and the action of the author in shaping the reader's response.

Response 2

... but I thought (E') that the old lady's actions towards the servant and her son were very similar to those of the spider (+) and I felt (E') that this story was made very effective (x) by the writer not telling (E") how the old lady felt (+) but letting you think (E') about how she feels ...

In this second text, we also encounter a reasoning consciousness and an opportunity for discussion with a teacher alive to the student's meanings. If we look closely at the logic of students' wordings, we are in a better position to understand their reasoning *and* shift them in the direction of the discipline's 'horizon of expectations' (Marshall, 2004).

In my research, I applied the principle of metafunctions to syndromes of meaning choices at different ranges of achievement in responses to narrative. Table 1 presents each metafunction and a related probe question.

Metafunction	Probe questions
Experiential	What is the text about for the student?
Logical	What is the dominant logic of reply?
Interpersonal	What evaluative stance is adopted towards the text?
Textual	How does the student engage with the text and how is this displayed in the method of development of response?

Table 1: A metafunctional perspective on students' meaning orientations.

The probes can be seen as 'optics' that make students' orientation to meaning visible. Seen through an experiential lens, a student can construe the 'content' of a story as enigmatic (about a few different things), as a window on experience (what happens in the story) or as symbolic (about big themes in life). Although the orientation is not always singular, there tends to be one dominant approach to interpretation of the text. The logic of 'reply' can be aggregative, retelling or reframing, or some combination thereof. The evaluative stance can be subjective, empathic (identifying with

one or more character) or text axiological (attuned to values privileged by the text). Engagement with composition can be local (even atomistic), global and chronological (syntagmatic) or global and relational (paradigmatic). Interestingly, there tends to be mutual attraction between semantic features associated with a reading. For example, a tactical reading often speculates over content, adopts an aggregative logic, reacts subjectively and engages locally with the composition. This suggests that a reading practice will have a distinctive semantic character even if there are individual differences within a student's interpretation of a narrative.

Figure 4 represents the options for meaning in a system network, with choices arrayed in response to a probe question:

What is the text about for the student?
- The text is **enigmatic** – about a few different things
- The text is **a window on experience** – about what happens
- The text is a **symbolic construct** – about big themes in life

By what logic does the student generate a response?
- The student **lists and aggregates details** about the text
- The student **retells and explains events** of the story
- The students **explores and reframes text significance**

How does the student evaluate the text?
- The student **reacts subjectively to parts of the text**
- The student **identifies characters' feelings & viewpoints**
- The student **evaluates voices & attitudes embodied in text**

How does the student engage wilth the text?
- The student **fixates on local aspects of text** (atomistic)
- The student engages with **global features of text** (syntagmatic)
- The student interprets **global features of text** (paradigmatic)

Figure 4: Options for reading narrative.

It is possible to infer the contextualization strategies employed by students if we take a semantic approach to their reading. Generally, tactical readings emerge in contexts where students take the 'what do you think' aspect of the context (and the question) seriously. They will often try to 'say something about the text' in what appears as a kind of 'workaround' typical of readings produced when the context and the text are confusing.

Table 2 below provides examples from tactical readings, all of which were relegated to low-range achievement by examiners. I have underlined relevant linguistic choices to bring out the semantic orientation associated with each metafunction and probe question.

Metafunction/ Probe Question	Tactical reading: 'Say something about the text'
Experiential What is the text about for the student?	It's a **puzzle** **Example**: <u>The main thing that caught my attention</u> *was when Mrs Burnett asked about the toy horse and told him not to play with toys …*
Logical By what logic does the student generate a response?	**Aggregative** logic **Example:** *To me it <u>had a few things</u> the story was about. How the father is away from his wife and son <u>and</u> telling us how the wife is surviving with her son <u>and then</u> is goes near the end of the story how Mrs Burnett reacted <u>when</u> she saw the horse in the pocket <u>and</u> it sounded like she didn't care if they got hurt*
Interpersonal How does the student evaluate the text?	**Subjective** response **Example**: <u>*Know wonder*</u> *she was a old widow, the <u>silly old witch</u> <u>proberly</u> drove him to die<u>!</u>*
Textual How does the student engage with the com-position?	**Local (atomistic)** **Example:** *I think the story is good. <u>The writer uses similes</u> "like a black pearl" <u>and very descriptive about the spider</u>. I feel the story doesn't really have much to do with red back spiders.*

Table 2: The semantic features of tactical readings.

Some students adopted a very different orientation to the task. They ignored puzzles in *The Red-Back Spider* and construed the task as a demand for a semiotic reading, privileging symbolic interpretation of events. An extract from Response 3 is presented as Figure 5 and achieved an A-range mark (15 out of 20). Even though the writing is somewhat awkward, the student interprets the task and the narrative in ways approved by examiners.
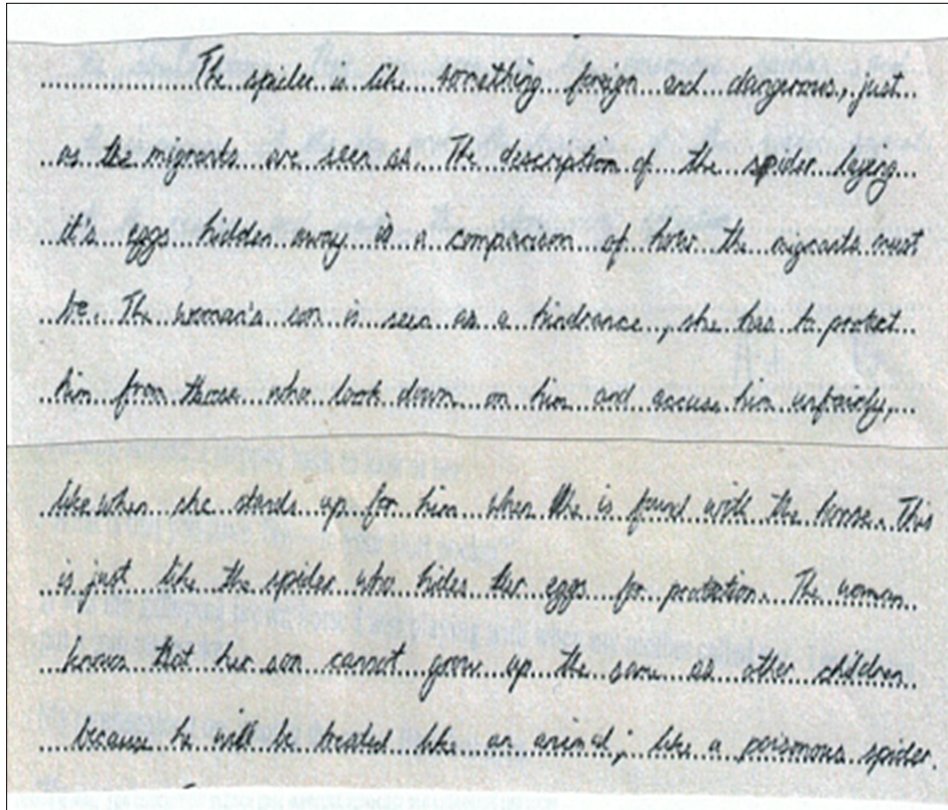
Figure 5: Response 3.

It is easy to discern the difference between successful and unsuccessful responses in their 'logics of reply'. Response 3 reframes the narrative, comparing the spider's hiding of her eggs to the woman's protectiveness towards her son. Elaboration is a key resource which enables the student to shift upwards in gears towards symbolic abstraction so highly valued in L1 English.

Response 3

The spider is like something foreign and dangerous,(=) just as the migrants are seen as. The description of the spider laying its eggs hidden away is a comparison of how the migrants must be. The woman's son is seen as a hindrance,(=) she has to protect him from those who look down on him and accuse him unfairly, like when she stands up for him when he is found with the horse. (=) This is just like the spider (=) who hides her eggs for protection. The woman knows that her son cannot grow up the same as other children because he will be treated like an animal; (=) like a poisonous spider.

Like others in the top range, this student ignores the red herring in the task and focusses on the text as symbolic. In this strategy, the inexplicable actions of Mrs Burnett are passed over for a reading that explains the treatment of the migrants in terms of discrimination. Thus, the dilemma of the woman's actions is ignored and the text is approached as if it is fully meaningful. The evaluative stance is appreciative without being overly subjective, and the student ranges over the whole text (and its relations) to produce a global (paradigmatic) response to the composition.

Table 3 depicts the semantic features of a semiotic reading such as that evident in Response 3.

Metafunction/ Probe Question	Semiotic reading - 'Attend to higher order significance'
Experiential What is the text about for the student?	It's a symbolic construct **Example**: *The separation between the two lifestyles, that of the lonely, selfish old woman, and the hardworking mother is the essence of the story.*
Logical By what logic does the student generate a response?	**Reframing** logic (=) **Example:** *The spider is like a comparison of the boy and his mother. They are treated in the way the spider is; = they are seen as if they are poisonous.*
Interpersonal How does the student evaluate the text?	**Appreciative/impartial** stance **Example**: *However the sadness of the child's mother runs deeper than her fear of the spider. She is upset that this old woman, like the spider, hides her precious things away, and runs to protect them at any sign of danger.*
Textual How does the student engage with the text?	**Global (paradigmatic)** engagement **Example:** *The spider is like something foreign and dangerous, just as the migrants are seen as. The description of the spider laying its eggs hidden away is a comparison of how the migrants must be.*

Table 3: The semantic features of the semiotic reading.

The reading practices of boundary students – a sociological view

Whilst a semiotic approach sheds light on linguistic aspects of students' readings, it does not explain their social origins. In my analyses of hundreds of student texts, I came to realize that literate responses were sometimes given low grades because they had not approached the text in the 'right way' (Macken-Horarik, 2003, 2006). In this respect, the difficulties were social rather than (just) linguistic. A sociological

perspective on trajectories of boundary students is necessary to fully understand why students whose insights are profound are vulnerable to failure in school English.

A sociologist of education, Basil Bernstein observed that differences in school achievement were not primarily related to students' intelligence or exposure to particular varieties of English, but connected to the interactive practices into which students were socialized. For Bernstein, as for Richard Teese in Australia (2011), a formative influence upon students' trajectories in schooling is class structure. This "influences work and educational roles and brings families into a special relationship with each other and deeply penetrates the structure of life experiences within the family" (Bernstein, 1971, p. 175). Bernstein realized that middle-class students communicated in ways that made them more likely to succeed in school than their working-class counterparts. He linked class differences to *classification* and *framing* values, which he operationalized through what he respectively called *recognition rules* and *realization rules* (Bernstein, 1982, 1990):

> Classification and framing are theoretical concepts which attempt to specify the nature of the rules transmitters and acquirers are expected to learn if they are to produce what count as legitimate meanings and the legitimate form of their realization in relevant contexts. *We do not have classification and framing in our heads but tacit rules for the recognition and realization of contextually specific meanings and practices*. (Bernstein, 1990, p. 127, my italics).

Using Bernstein's categories, we can see how their social formation shapes some students' reading of task requirements. Within the portion of the school population able to 'recognize' what a question is *really* asking, some are better able to 'realize' requirements in a successful response. Socially advantaged students are more likely to contextualize a task (and thus read a text) in institutionally valorized ways. Others, often students on the boundaries of schooling, do not have access to the 'rules' that invisibly infiltrate practices in L1 classrooms. In my experience, they assume that a question about their thoughts about a text is akin to those asked by teachers every day in classrooms. Taking the 'what do you think' aspect of a question at face value, they will offer opinions and comment subjectively, saying 'something' about a text, as the question seems to imply. In Bernstein's terms, they will misrecognize the context as familiar (or everyday) and thus be unable to proffer an acceptable (literary) reading. Table 4 applies Bernstein's recognition and realization 'rules' to contextualization practices of boundary students and the kinds of response they produce as a result.

Recognition & Realization rules	Tactical reading
Recognition - 'What's required of me here?'	**Contextualization:** "This is an ambiguous situation. The story is enigmatic. Consider what it means for you personally. Try to imagine why it is written the way it is and what the author might have wanted to achieve. Tune into one or more details of interest."
Realization - What kind of response will work?	**Response strategy:** "Produce a personal response. Write about your reaction to one or more aspects of the text. You could imagine other endings, empathize with the characters or respond to something in the text. Just keep writing!"

Table 4: A sociological interpretation of the tactical reading.

No matter how plausible the line of inquiry adopted, and no matter how well they write, students' social (and class) formation will influence the 'rules' they apply to a situation and how they respond to its demands. The difficulty becomes more acute when the task is apparently open-ended, as in this case – 'Why *do you think* the story ends this way?'

Students who know how to 'read' contexts such as the one I am considering in this chapter operate differently again. Table 5 presents the 'recognition' and 'realization' rules tacitly influencing the readings of successful students.

Recognition & Realization rules	Semiotic reading
Recognition - What's required of me here?	**Contextualization:** "This situation requires literary competence. Even if we ask you why you think the story ends this way, you should not speculate. Adopt an appreciative (impartial) stance, interpret its symbolic significance and attend to binary oppositions that organize it."
Realization - What kind of response will work?	**Response strategy:** "Produce a literary reading interpreting events as symbolically akin; adopt a compliant reading of value positions invited by the text and demonstrate global, paradigmatic awareness of the pattern of meanings in the text".

Table 5: A sociological interpretation of the semiotic reading.

The analysis presented above reveals that even though tactical readings are not valorized, they yield insights that we miss if we accept institutional practices (and exclusions) of L1 English at face value. The semiotic reading *is* highly valued, even if it avoids the challenge of a close reading and lacks a willingness to puzzle over

perplexing logogenesis. A tactical reading is a launching pad for discussion and a stepping stone towards a semiotic reading. In this way, the first readings become part of the expanded repertoire that an attuned and effective teacher can mediate.

Effective mentoring only occurs if teachers have an appreciation of disciplinary directions in which to head and can scaffold a semiotic reading amongst other possible readings. But it also depends on a sociological appreciation of how their social formation might lead students to make more or less productive assumptions about the demands and possibilities of a learning context. The teacher must attend to all three factors affecting semogenesis – the text in focus, the individual's current orientation to meaning and the social formation currently influencing this. The task is to widen students' purview so they can interpret texts in ways apposite to the discipline. When it comes to a semiotic reading, this means relating local features of interest in texts to their global patterning in a composition, interpreting their symbolic significance and ways in which they position readers to see, feel and value what happens to characters in a story. Teachers have a vital role to play in helping students 'recognize' what is required in a task (what counts where) and scaffolding rhetorical nous so they can 'realize' requirements by writing a successful response. I turn to this challenge in the next section.

Introducing students to a semiotic reading – teacher challenge and uptake

Australian teachers are expected to induct students into semiotic analysis of multimodal texts like picture books, graphic novels, posters, websites and films (ACARA, 2012). The data presented in this section was collected in the final year of a project investigating the relevance of systemic functional (SF) grammatics for English (Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011; Macken-Horarik, Sandiford, Love & Unsworth, 2015). In adapting this metalanguage for multimodality, we exploited the resonance between meanings made in verbal and visual texts. For example, Projection in language is akin to speech bubbles in graphic novels and lip sync in films. Verbs of perception in linguistic narratives can be related to gaze vectors in picture books and even shot-reverse-shot in films. Attitudinal language can be related to colour choices that generate 'Ambience' in images (Painter, Martin & Unsworth, 2013) and so on. In the grammatics project, we made use of the analogic potential of SFL to explore the complementary contribution of image and verbiage to narrative semiosis.

If they were to move from an insightful tactical reading to a semiotic reading, students would need access to tools that helped them see texts as semiotic constructs – what I call meta-semiosis. Meta-semiosis is not something educators fully appreciate (Unsworth, 2014). But it can be made visible using a metafunctional framework

adapted for disciplinary knowledges like L1 English (Macken-Horarik, 2016). For example, when reading multimodal narratives, students needed to learn how to relate concrete particulars such as setting, character and action to their symbolic import (experiential). Logically, they needed to learn not just how to accumulate insights but to reframe these in light of themes of the text. Interpersonally, they needed to distinguish the feelings and views of characters from value positions privileged by the text (its axiology). Authors often distance readers from the values of characters in the diegesis through interpersonal choices in the text (Macken-Horarik, 2003). And textually, students needed to engage with texts as compositions rather than just as stories. This is not to privilege the semiotic reading by fiat, as if it were the only one worth teaching, only to show that its requirements can be made visible and students' chances of success improved.

The metalanguage of SFL is a challenge for teachers. In order to make it manageable for participating teachers in four workshop days, we needed to be selective about which aspects of the Grammatics project would be productive in supporting students in reading narratives. We focussed on interpersonal meaning, because it is an aspect that is often not taken into consideration in literacy teaching in Australia or taught in very superficial ways. Workshops introduced visual choices in Interactive Meaning systems such as Social Distance, Focalization and Subjectivity. These technical terms are capitalized because they designate choices within system networks outlined in SFL and recent adaptations of this for images. Drawing on seminal work by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, we showed teachers how to analyse 'shots' of characters in literary picture books, posters and films (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). A semiotic reading requires identification of formal features and their functions (e.g. how close-ups engage viewers directly while distant 'shots' offer an impersonal view). But it also means relating features to 'big issues', such as animal cruelty in *The Great Bear* (Gleeson & Greder, 1999) or the healing power of love in *The Tunnel* (Browne, 1989), both of which featured in our work with teachers.

Some teachers also related choices in key systems to probe questions for teaching children about artists' choices.

Figure 6 presents one adaptation of interactive meanings developed by a teacher we called Carol in our project.[4] It is based on systems explained in *Reading Visual Narratives* (Painter, Martin & Unsworth, 2013).

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4 Carol, like all names for teachers and students, is a pseudonym to protect the identity of research participants.

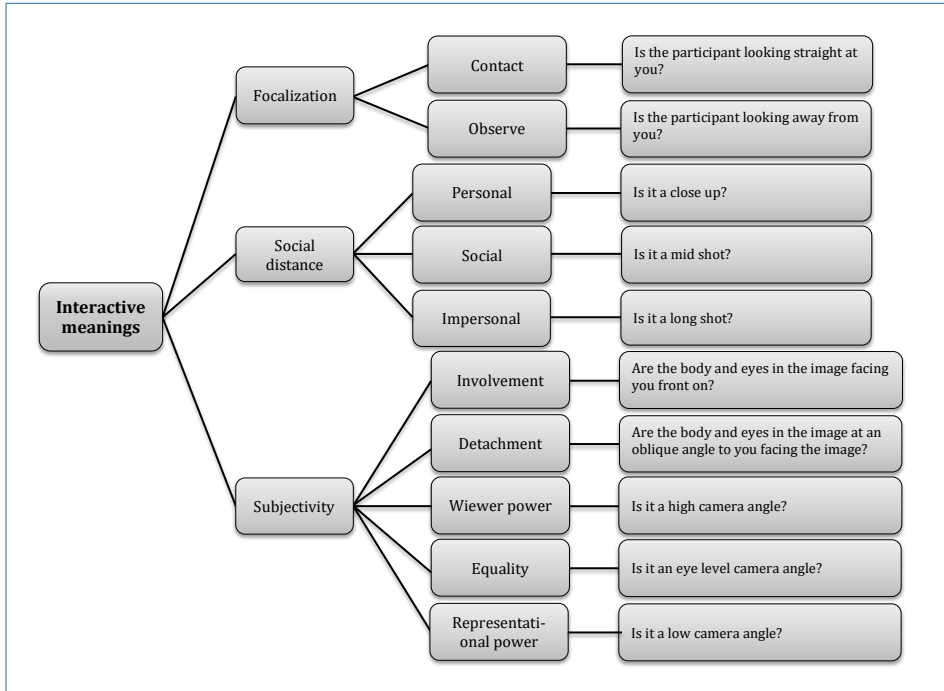| | | Contact | Is the participant looking straight at you? |
	Focalization	Observe	Is the participant looking away from you?
		Personal	Is it a close up?
	Social distance	Social	Is it a mid shot?
Interactive meanings		Impersonal	Is it a long shot?
		Involvement	Are the body and eyes in the image facing you front on?
		Detachment	Are the body and eyes in the image at an oblique angle to you facing the image?
	Subjectivity	Wiewer power	Is it a high camera angle?
		Equality	Is it an eye level camera angle?
		Representati-onal power	Is it a low camera angle?

Figure 6: Options for interactive meaning in images and probe questions.

Students learned to identify and discuss images using their new semiotic vocabulary and participated in discussions about how they added to, opposed or counterpointed the language of picture books and other multimodal texts. Teachers used explicit pedagogies to scaffold higher order understandings – moving students from identification of choices made (e.g. type of shot, camera angle and gaze) to description of their function on the page and into interpretation of changes in these choices in the course of the narrative. Introduced to this semiotic toolkit, project students were able to develop a more global orientation to composition, attention to themes and text values and meta-semiotic awareness overall. Teacher mentoring took them in some exciting new directions in their reading and response repertoires.

One of the texts – *The Lost Thing,* written and illustrated by Shaun Tan (2000) – proved a wonderful resource for several teachers. *The Lost Thing* is a story about a boy who discovers a bizarre creature whilst collecting bottle tops at the beach. After some time playing with the 'thing', the boy realizes the creature is lost and decides to find out who owns it or where it belongs. The enterprise fails, with each person he contacts indifferent to the creature. The boy feels sorry for the lost thing and attempts to find somewhere to take it so it will no longer be lost. The story ends with a question about which character is really lost.

A Year 6 teacher, Megan, reported on the impact of *The Lost Thing* on her class. Figure 7 is an extract from her presentation for teachers about how she worked with interactive meanings. It includes shots of students' analyses of layout and emphasis.

The first thing we did was to teach the students how the Interactive meanings could impact the reader and create meaning through the characters' positions. Firstly as a class and then individually, students looked at the layout of the text. They identified the backgrounds, borders, where and how the text was laid out. They then looked at how certain things within the layout stood out through colour, position or size. Students were able to easily look at the text level structure of The Lost Thing and identify the stages of the narrative. ...
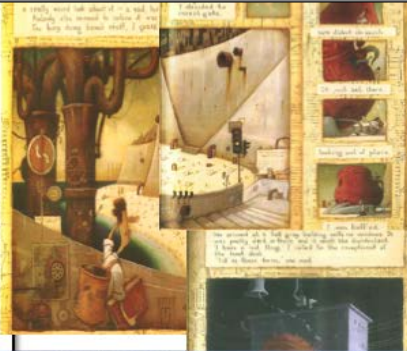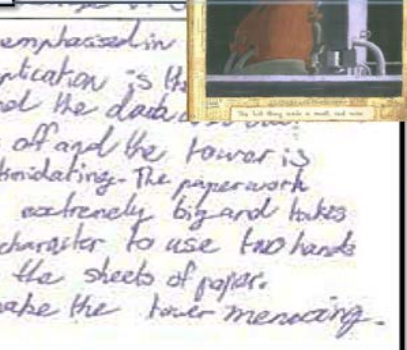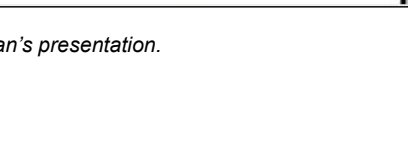

Figure 7: An extract from Megan's presentation.

Megan was impressed by the impact of this new metalanguage on formerly disengaged students. We explore the response of one of these students in the next section. To assess development of semiotic awareness, we asked teachers to give students a common prompt and to collect and evaluate their written responses to questions about image and verbiage. *The Great Bear* by Libby Gleeson and Armin Greder (1999) was the text we used to assess students' starting points. Following a three-month period working with visual analysis, text response and interpretation, teachers gave students a second prompt – a picture book called *The Tunnel* by Anthony Browne (2000). The questions posed focussed on choices for Social Distance, Attitude and Focalization, which had been the major focus of teaching.

Students' responses to the first multimodal narrative were minimal in scope, highly subjective and superficial in significance. Many revealed an inability to recognize what was required in the task. As Tables 6, 7 and 8 below indicate, students typically identified the main character when asked what the story was about. Their explanations were framed in terms of the diegesis rather than the shaping of the story by artist and author. Most students were stymied by this first task.

Students' responses to the second narrative revealed a different story. Many students initially regarded as struggling by teachers revealed a shift from a limited focus on characters and events to a more global awareness of the text as construct. They demonstrated a richer capacity to reason semiotically – moving from the 'what' and the 'how' to the 'why' of an author's choices. For example, whereas in their first response most students had ignored front and end papers of the picture book (which in *The Great Bear* in the first task are central pivotal to the cosmological significance of the narrative), they now paid attention to the final pages of *The Tunnel* (also crucial to higher order significance). It was clear from both oral and written work that students' semogenesis was expanding

Tracking semogenesis in students' readings

It is possible to track semogenesis in oral and written responses by students, following teacher interventions. To reprise the model outlined earlier, readers learned to read multimodal texts and developed new orientations to meaning through the support of semiotically informed and explicit pedagogy. Figure 8 reprises each variable relevant to the development of text response.
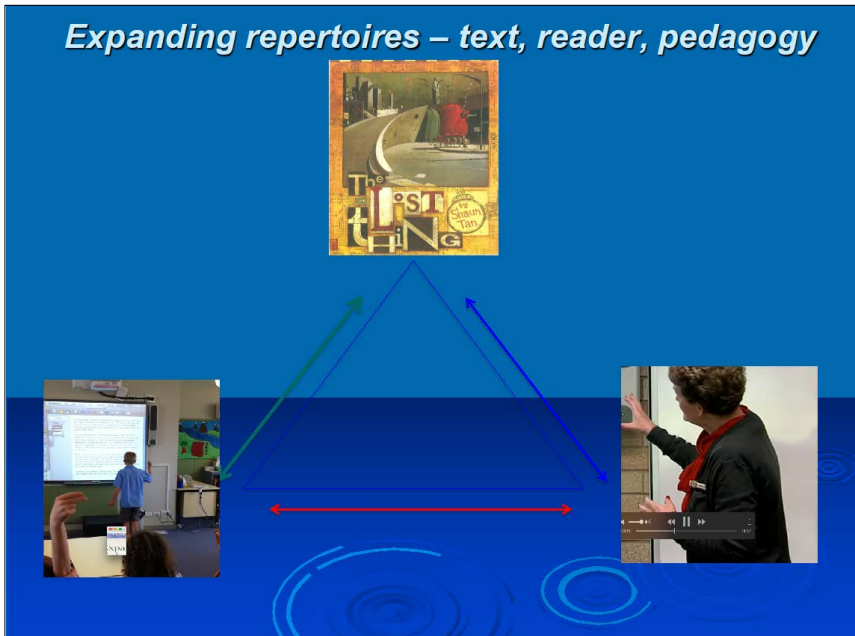
Figure 8: Three variables influencing expansion of students' repertoires.

Sociologically, we wanted to know how students construed not just the subject matter of the story but the kind of context they were 'in'. We asked the same kind of open-ended question in each prompt. When asked 'What is the story about?', students could interpret this as an opportunity to identify characters (a bear, a brother and sister), a retelling task (a story sequence) or a demand for symbolic interpretation (higher order themes). The kinds of questions we asked are included in tables 6-8 following discussion of responses by each student. Two earlier publications deal with the relationship between students' interpretations and visual aspects of the common prompt (Unsworth & Macken-Horarik, 2014; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018). In this chapter, I focus on emerging semiotic orientations in boundary students like Daki (Year 4), Theo (Year 5/6), Emile (Year 6) and Louise (Year 10). These were just four of the students who talked to us in interviews about their responses, elaborating on and explaining thinking evident in written work they had produced earlier.

Daki (Year 4)

One of the teachers working in a remote region of Australia – Alice – spent some weeks exploring interactive meanings with her Year 4 students, many of whom were disadvantaged through economic hardship and isolation. Like **Daki**, the other ten year-olds in Alice's class were new to semiotic reading. Daki spoke to a co-researcher (Carmel Sandiford) and I about her interpretation of *The Lost Thing*. The richness of her insights can be captured through logico-semantic analysis.

Carmel:	Do you remember any parts of that story that made you think that he was the lost thing?
Daki:	Well, at the beginning he was very - quite boring. (=) He was just looking for a bottle caps collection.
Carmel:	That's right.
Daki:	And then he sees the lost thing (+) and he's very peculiar about it (+) but lost in a way.
Carmel:	Ah, ha.
Daki:	He doesn't know (E') what it is, (=) how he got there. (=) He just seems lost himself.
Mary:	Isn't that true.
Carmel:	It is true, and at the very end, too.
Mary:	What happens in the end? I can't remember.
Carmel:	The very end is where - well do you remember?
Daki:	Yeah… he gives the lost thing not to the prison, basically, (+) but it is - || it's very - || (x) because all the movie was very dull || (x) but when he got to this very nice place || it was very colourful || (+) and there were heaps of bright things and colourful lost things || (+) and he lets him go there, (+) || and I think (E') he actually found the lost thing || (x) so that he could open up || (+) and actually not be lost himself. (=) That's why he tried to solve the lost thing in himself (E') I think.

Daki's comments suggest an emerging understanding of the symbolic significance of the enigma of the lost thing. She realizes that the boy who finds the creature is the one who is really lost. It was clear to us that Daki arrived at this insight in the course of our conversation. Mary asked: 'What happens in the end?' and Daki responded freely, articulating her thinking in a dialogue which supports her reasoning. The logico-semantic connections highlight the generativeness of her reasoning – a growing awareness of the symbolic meaning of 'lost'. There is evidence in her use of Elaboration of a growing capacity for reframing, putting her in a strong position for later work in L1 English.

Theo (Year 5/6)

In a different class at the same regional school, Carol taught her Year 5/6 students about visual Focalisation, which refers to the perceptual angle on experience presented in the gaze of characters. Figure 9 is taken from Painter et al. (2013), which we used to outline Focalisation in images. I reproduce the figure (which at that time was 'in press') because it helps in understanding what Theo was able to see *and* explain as a result of his teacher's mentoring.
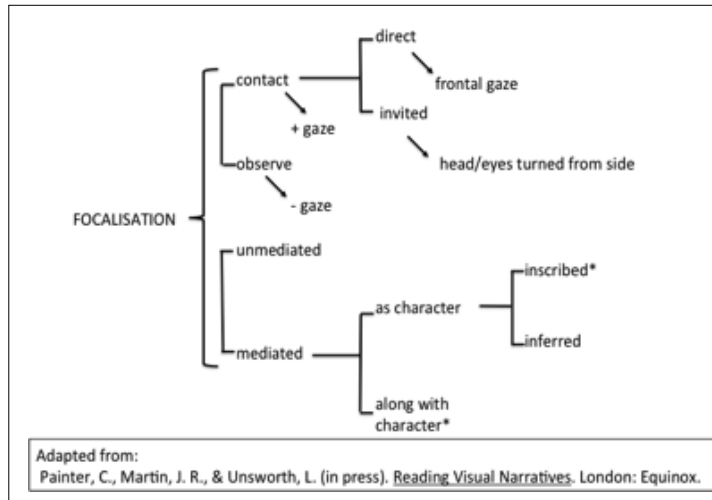
Figure 9: Focalisation options introduced to Year 5/6 by Carol Painter.

Theo was a boundary student whose written work was poor and who caused problems for his teacher when he felt alienated by literacy tasks. However, Theo was highly engaged by classroom work on Focalization. In our interview, he led me down an unexpected path – the connection between point of view and first- and third-person video games. Figure 6 demonstrates the depth of his engagement with the topic of mediated point of view and an ability to reason about its workings in video games.

Mary: Now, you mentioned something else which is quite complex and demanding – mediated and unmediated Focalization. Can you explain the difference, and can you find an example here? I don't know if there are any examples in *The Tunnel.*

Theo: I think unmediated is we're like not at all in the picture (+) but like with my video games that I play - You're like behind them, (=) you're like right behind them and (+) you are controlling them.

Mary: And is that unmediated, when you are right behind the character or mediated?

Theo: I think that's - Mediated.

Mary: Mediated is where you are actually looking behind with the characters as if you were standing there?

Theo: It's mediated either when you are facing - (=) You're the person (+) and you can see just their hands (+) or maybe nothing. (+) Or you're there (+) and you can see like a bit of their head and the shoulder (+) and you can see [[what they're doing]] (+) but you're not <u>actually</u> them - (=) It's like *Grand Theft Auto.*

Mary: What's that?

Theo: Oh, a video game.

Mary: How does that work in *Grand Theft Auto*? Are you looking at mediated images mainly there or unmediated?

Theo: Mediated. (x) Because it's like third-person camera. (x) So, like you are not all in there (+) but you are controlling them (+) but you are not in the picture or anything.

Mary: But it's as if you are.

Theo: Yeah, well he's running around (+) and you can see his back, (=) you can only see his back (+) and like you can turn around and that sort of stuff.

Mary: Okay.

Theo: But the first-person camera is *Modern Warfare 3*.

Mary: Modern Warfare 3 is first person. How so?

Theo: (x) Because you can only see, (=) like you're the actual person and *you're* the person (+) and you're looking out the eyes. (=) You can only see thumbs and the arms -

Mary: Okay, that's interesting Theo. You've given me so much feedback on what you've been learning. I can see you've been learning a lot.

The logico-semantic features of Theo's discourse reveal his enthusiasm to not only elaborate on what he has learned, but to share it with me (who knew nothing of *Grand Theft Auto*). Many students in Carol's class talked with me about what they were learning, and their explanations were just as lively and engaging. Theo's oral explanations outstripped his written ones, which were tangential to questions posed about the text. But development is nevertheless evident.

Whilst his interpretation of *The Great Bear* was fairly minimal, it was more precise when he wrote about *The Tunnel*. There are signs of symbolic interpretation in verb choices like 'shows' and his use of causal conjunctions like 'because' and 'so' to develop messages. Theo's work on images provided him with a footing on the path to a semiotic reading and a way of looking afresh at games that were part of his everyday interactions with multimodal texts.

Emile (Year 6)

Emile was regarded by Megan (mentioned earlier) as one of her weaker students. He was new to Australia and to English as an additional language. His discourse reveals occasional difficulties with subject-verb agreement and pronoun reference. But Emile's intuitions about semiosis were strong, even in his first response. He was one of the few primary school students to 'get' the connection between the story of the great bear and the creation of the 'Great Bear' constellation in his response to the first question in the prompt. The following extract from Carmel's interview with Emile and a second student (Kian) focuses on what he had learned about interactive meanings from his teacher. Here he reflects on point of view in relation to the last picture of the brother and sister in *The Tunnel* (picked up in Q2i in Table 6):

Carmel: Okay. What else has your teacher helped you with? I know you talked a little bit about colour and how that helps you understand something about images. What about interactive meanings? Did you do anything on that?

Emile: Yes, we learnt some different modems (sic). For example, we learnt demand and - -

Kian: Equality?

Emile: Yes, equality in this picture.

Carmel: And you are looking at the very last picture in *The Tunnel*?

Emile: Yes, where the two main characters are looking at each other. In this one, they - it's intimate, so it's quite close, it's a headshot and it has a detachment, but it quite shows you how happy the face is. For example, you can see the detail that's in the face and the smile.

Carmel: So why close?

Emile: I'm guessing this - because in other pictures they don't really give you a good view of her face and she isn't really smiling in those faces. She's just - not much face detail. Whereas this one, they have finally been through something together; they're now a real family, so in this one they're showing they're actually friends, they are actually now a proper family.

Carmel: Thanks, that's terrific. Thanks, Emile.

Emile has pursued a line of inquiry that builds on what Megan emphasized in classroom interactions – a concern for the 'why' beneath the 'what' of semiotic choices in picture books. This is the reason why students analyse images in the discipline of English – they need to explain the effect of particular selections. English, after all,

is a subject about meaning, as Kress has observed (Kress, 2006). Let's pause for a moment on the unfolding dynamism of his insight using logico-semantic resources of Expansion and Projection. It is significant that Emile frames his excursion as a guess, which is the basis of abductive reasoning so apposite to a discipline like English, with its focus on meaning:

> (E') *I'm guessing this* – (x) because in other pictures they don't really give you a good view of her face (+) and she isn't really smiling in those faces. (=) She's just - not much face detail. (+) Whereas this one, they have finally been through something together; (=) they're now a real family (x) so in this one they're showing (E') they're actually friends, (=) they are actually now a proper family.

There are two features to note about this short discourse. The first is that, like Emile, we are on the edge of his thinking as he integrates his understanding of the link between facial expressions like smiling and emotional states with awareness of the higher order theme of this narrative – becoming a real family. Emile deploys the full set of logico-semantic resources to build this argument – Extension, Enhancement, Elaboration and projection of ideas (E'). Emile is using language at full stretch and his reasoning activates a wide range of logical connections. The second is that Elaboration enables him to shift the discourse upwards into symbolic abstraction. So we get the facial view and the smile and then the reformulation in 'they're a real family … they're actually friends' as he highlights the implications of the illustrator's choices. In comparing early and later moments in the narrative, Emile also demonstrates global awareness of relations between one part of the text and another. He is no longer limited to a retelling strategy but is moving into a relational reading of the oppositions.

   In scaffolding meta-semiotic awareness, Emile's teacher achieved more than an introduction to technicality. She highlighted purpose (the 'why') behind visual choices. As with Theo, Emile's spoken response showed greater evidence of growth than his writing. Students learned about choices and their meaning through classroom interactions and could demonstrate this more easily in talk than they could in writing. This dialogism is a key aspect of pedagogies associated with the Sydney School – the importance of 'guidance *through interaction* in the context of shared experience' (Martin, 1999; Rose & Martin, 2012, emphasis added). Table 7 presents Emile's written responses with salient choices in bold typeface.

The Great Bear	*The Tunnel*
Q1) What is the story about? *A circus bear a dancing bear*	Q1) What is the story about? *The story is about a brother and sister who are nothing alike and then they come across a tunnel …*
Q2f) Why are we looking down on the people in the picture? *We are at the bears point of view*	Q2a) This double page begins with "His sister was frightened." Why is the first image of the girl shown as it is? *Because on the page the text says that "His sister was frightened" **so** part of the text relates to the text on a previous page cause it says "She was afraid of the dark".*
Q2i) Why has the artist drawn the faces of the people like this? *It fits the book*	Q4) The last double page begins with "When they reached home…" Why do you think the last image is shown as it is? *This image is picked **because** "when they reached home" - the image for that part of the text won't relate to the story.*
Q2j) The last double page has only one word. Why is this one word important to the story? *Because the bear is making this word and the bear is important to the book*	Q3c) Why do you think the last word, TOGETHER, is printed by itself on the last line? *On a previous page there mother says "Out you go together and try to be nice to each other just this once" **so** on the fourth image it **shows** that they are having a cuddle and being nice to each other.*

Table 6: Theo's written responses to prompt questions about picture books.

The Great Bear	*The Tunnel*
Q1) What is the story about? *The story is about a bear who is in a circus and she dances for the crowed some of the clap but other hurt her but in the end she had enough so she jumped of a pole and became the constellation the great bear.*	Q1) What is the story qbout? *The story is about two people they were sister and brother but they had nothing in common untill her brother went into a tunnel but when he didn't come back out she had to go inside the tunnel to retrieve him although she was scared she went ahead to save him and at the end they became friends and sister and brother.*
Q2f) Why are we looking down on the people in the picture? *Because they are in charge.*	Q2a) This double page begins with "His sister was frightened." Why is the first image of the girl shown as it is? *It **shows** that the sister was frightened and scared also it **shows** that the girl is lonely without her brother.*
Q2i) Why has the artist drawn the faces of the people like this? ***So** we know the people are being cautious.*	Q4) The last double page begins with "When they reached home…" Why do you think the last image is shown as it is? *The last image is shown as it is **because it shows** that they are family and in this picture instead of the other shows cool and warm colours whitch brings out a great feeling to our harts not only that but this is possibly the only picture smiling at such great detail **it's also has equality and is an intimate shot so you can really see the detail of her face and happiness.***
Q2j) The last double page has only one word. Why is this one word important to the story? *it says that the bear has had enough*	Q3c) Why do you think the last word, TOGETHER, is printed by itself on the last line? *I think that together has its own line and is bold **because** they are now a proper family and that they love each other now.*

Table 7: Emile's written responses to prompt questions about the picturebooks.

Emile's attention to features of Social Distance (e.g. intimate) and colour (e.g. cool and warm) is noteworthy. Particularly revealing is his use of symbolic processes (e.g. shows) which enable him to highlight the abstract significance of forms. In his second response, Emile is reasoning more from text than story, with the composer 'causing' choices rather than the characters, as in his response to the first prompt. Furthermore,

he is taking account of different selections – gaze, colour and shot size – which he explains in detail.

Louise (Year 10)

In an earlier section of this paper, I signalled the value of reasoning about the 'why' beneath the 'what' of narrative composition. Tom's Year 10 group responded to this emphasis and several of his students demonstrated growing awareness of intentionality in their reasoning. Like Daki, Theo and Emile, Louise revealed growing literariness in her interpretive practices.

The interview with Louise is taken from a longer dialogue between a peer (Helen) and researcher (Carmel) during which Carmel urged Louise to develop her account of the significance of events in *The Tunnel*. The extract below pivots around the transformation of the character of the brother, who had earlier made fun of his sister's timidity, into a stone statue.

Carmel:	Is there anything else you would like to say about *The Tunnel*, the work that you have been doing, anything? Go on, Louise – you've got an idea.
Louise:	There was just one thing I noticed. I guess it just symbolizes – you know – when the brother went into the tunnel and the next time we see him as a stone in the dark, magical forest I guess, which is what you normally see in fairy-tale books, right.
Carmel:	Ah … yes … Very good.
Louise:	Yes, it just kind of makes me feel like the brother and the sister somehow are - um, how do you say it?
Helen:	Are alike?
Louise:	No, they kind of get the feel of what the other - what the other's world is like,
Helen:	That's good.
Louise:	…like how the brother is so energetic and adventurous and like how the girl would not normally do that, but this time she went into the tunnel on her own, into this adventure. And then the boy, who doesn't do anything with the fantasy stuff, with fairy tales, fantasy, monsters and witches - now we see him in the girl's world, in this dark magical forest turned into stone. So …
Carmel:	That is so clever, Louise. You are so clever.
Louise:	I just thought of that when I read the book. Pretty good.

Helen:	Also it shows that they were able to experience the emotions that the other one would face in like the same situation, because he's running - normally he seems so brave and everything to his sister. But when he's frozen in stone, you can see on his face that he's really actually scared looking back and he's running really fast and he's frozen in that position and, in the tunnel, Rose is actually being the brave one and going in to get her brother.
Carmel:	It's like a role reversal. It's wonderful.
Louise:	That's it. That's it.
Carmel:	Thank you so much. That was terrific to hear that from both of you.

The exchange is full of the energy of sudden insight and the dialogic context enables both Louise and Helen to develop their intuitions, building on each other's reasoning. A logico-semantic analysis of this discussion reveals the dynamism of their joint thinking. In fact, it is possible to see the whole discourse as a reformulation of the first message: 'they get to experience what the other's world is like' – a key symbolic meaning in the picture book.

Louise:	(=) like how the brother is so energetic and adventurous (+) and like how the girl would not **normally** do that (x) **but** this time she went into the tunnel on her own into this adventure. (x) **And then** the boy, (=) who doesn't do anything with the fantasy stuff, with fairy tales, fantasy, monsters and witches – (x) **now** we see him in the girl's world, (=) in this dark magical forest turned into stone.

Louise's language choices suggest knowledge of an overarching narrative arc – the earlier 'state of affairs' of the characters indicated by the word 'normally', the girl's response to the crisis indicated by the conjunction 'but' and the boy's transformation indicated by the conjunctions 'and then'. She has developed global awareness of the text as crafted – as an aesthetic composition. She demonstrates insight into the text-reader relation in her final words – 'Now we see him in the girl's world', which is reformulated as 'in this dark magical forest turned into stone'. It is the reader who is addressed by the text now.

Sometimes growth appears in obvious ways. When it comes to writing, we noticed across the board that almost all students wrote markedly longer responses to the second prompt compared to the first. Table 8 presents examples from Louise's written responses to questions about the prompts.

Focus responses to picture books - Louise (Year 10)	
The Great Bear	**The Tunnel**
Q1) What is the story about? *The story is about a circus bear.*	Q1) What is the story about? *It's about two siblings, a brother and a younger sister, who at first doesn't get along due to the contrast of their personalities. But after they went through a mysterious tunnel, into a mysterious dark forest, they manage to overcome their differences and have learned to appreciate each other's way of living.*
Q2f) Why are we looking down on the people in the picture? *From my impression of them, it **looks as if** they are the menacing bullies to the bear.*	Q2a) This double page begins with "His sister was frightened." Why is the first image of the girl shown as it is? *The image of the girl frowning and having a negative look on her face **shows** the current emotions at this part of the story. The black background **represents** her acute fear of the dark, while the shape of it can clearly be seen as the tunnel.*
2i) Why has the artist drawn the faces of the people like this? *Dark colouring, shadowy faces and evil looking eyes drawn on the people's faces **shows** that they are not the sort of crowd you would like the hang around with.*	4) The last double page begins with "When they reached home…" Why do you think the last image is shown as it is? *The warm yellow lighting of this picture **gives** it a sense of warm feeling. The way how it shows the boy and girl really close to each other can **symbolise** how their relationship grew, to the point that they are really close now (compared to before, they are shown to be quite distanced apart all the time).*
2j) The last double page has only one word. Why is this one word important to the story? *This one word contains a lot of emotion (anger, courage), the part where a big change occurs, where in the storyline takes a big turn either for the better or worse.*	3c) Why do you think the last word, TOGETHER, is printed by itself on the last line? *It **emphasizes** the main message and the moral of the story, that siblings should love and appreciate each other.*

Table 8: Examples from Louise's responses to questions about prompt texts.

Although Louise is demonstrably aware of narrative structure in her response to Q2j on *The Great Bear*, her later work is palpably semiotic in character. In responding to the second prompt, she devotes attention to visual choices (gaze, colour framing) and to their significance (e.g. 'symbolizing how their relationship grew'). Development in symbolic abstraction is clear in the greater range of symbolic processes that enable her to demonstrate links between formal choices and significance (e.g. 'show', 'represent', 'emphasize' and 'symbolize'). A paradigmatic global orientation is evident too, whereby Louise highlights the contrast between the previous and current states of relatedness (Q 4). She is now reading the binaries that underpin the different worlds of the characters and the transformation of these through the warmth of the girl's response to her brother. Louise can process syntagmatic meanings in narrative (the diegesis), but is no longer captive to the sequence of events. In effect, she can read the paradigms that structure the text (the semiosis).

Conclusion

This chapter began with a commitment to return to an earlier space in which analysis occurred and think again about the inadequately recognized potential in students' responses to narratives. Tactical readings are not rare – they are often our first response to colour in an image, a troubling motif in a film, a meme, a joke or a blog post. We tend to react subjectively, wondering whether to read on or not. If we do read on, we process wordings, images and pages syntagmatically, deciphering choices 'on the run', working out what is going on. Later, we might reflect on the significance of choices – the layers of meanings they reveal. Paradigmatic interpretations shift out of sequences towards symbolic abstractions these sequences (may or may not) carry. This is not to disavow the importance of first responses. Without them, students are unlikely to move towards deeper and more nuanced readings. Central to this trajectory are dialogues that take students' responses seriously and reflect a willingness to track their unfolding insights carefully. This is more important if the student's oral or written response is halting, syntactically awkward, unfinished. The first response is often full of meaning and good sense, as I discovered when I looked again at several low ranked responses to *The Red-Back Spider*.

If teachers are to mentor semogenesis effectively, they need to allow time for reflection on the concrete particulars of a text, for initial subjective reactions to striking details in the composition and to listen attentively as students ponder the composer's interests and agendas. Conversations about texts such as those between researchers and students above often elicit insights are full of mutuality, play and the unforeseen insight. We make too little of the potential of such dialogues and as a result often vacate the space for interesting explorations with our students. In literacy classrooms,

repertoire development is central to what Martin and colleagues call 'individuation', in which young people take up the admittedly problematic resources of the larger culture (Martin, Zappavigna, Dwyer & Cleirigh, 2012). But culture can be found in moments of play too and in the leap of insight that is too easily relegated to the margins.

L1 classrooms are not just sites of semiosis but of semiotic study. One social semiotician who has influenced thinking in L1 English is Gunther Kress. He stresses the need for attention to theories of meaning in a renewed 'English':

> In some form or another, theories of meaning (-making) are at the core of 'English'. This is so, whether we are raising questions of (literary) creativity or the imposition of the norms of a putative standard form of a language. Explicitly or implicitly, theories of how we make meaning underpin all aspects of the English curriculum and of English pedagogies. In rethinking 'English', it is essential to bring these theories to the fore. They shape our actions so potently, so insistently, that to leave them implicit is to make reflection and new thinking impossible. (Kress, 2006, p. 37)

Kress's appeal to make theories of meaning more explicit in English is crucial to the dialogue between social semiotics and L1 English. Attention to the text (logogenesis) and tracking of students' developing capacities for meaning (ontogenesis) should be part of a broader social formation that inducts all young people in the meaning potentials of the culture (phylogenesis). Figure 10 depicts development from tactical to semiotic readings for Theo, Daki, Emile and Louise.
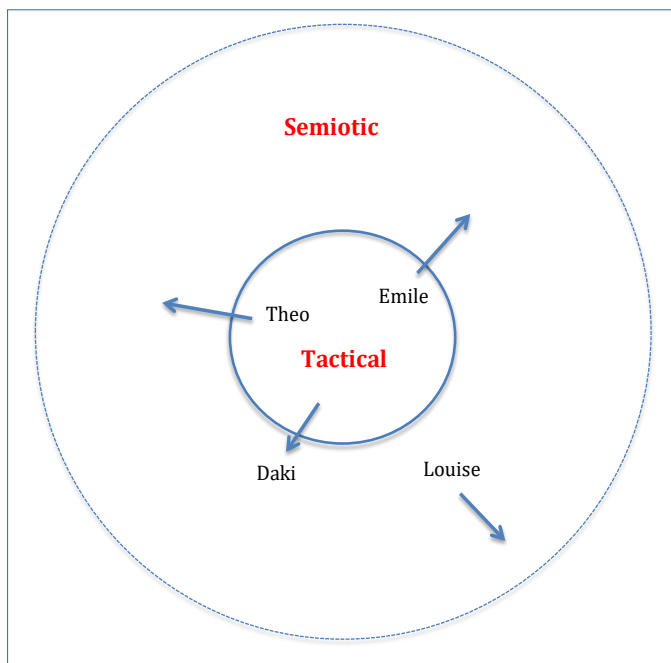

Figure 10: Widening purview.

Boundary students are students on the margins of classrooms, disciplines and (often) society. They participate, if at all, as visible or invisible outsiders. Many find it hard to invest in classroom discourses. They resist work on texts they find hard to read, act out, or (far too often) stay silent. As a result, they miss out on the discourse potential of English, they misrecognize high stakes contexts for everyday ones and fail to 'realize' not just an appropriate response but their potential as disciplinary insiders. Our job as researchers and teachers is to help students find a way in to L1 disciplines – a way they find engaging, revealing and fruitful. The tactics boundary students employ in first responses to a narrative, for example, are often full of insouciant liveliness. The examples presented in this chapter are a tiny sample of tactical readings that demonstrate powerful insights on narrative semiosis. Their forms of reasoning not only deserve recognition (perhaps the first 'rule' of teaching) but responsiveness on our part. The dialogues with Daki, Theo, Emile and Louise are examples of the richness of children's insights, which can be expressed, developed and extended if allowed to by the pedagogic formation.

However, we cannot leave our students where we found them. As teachers, we are all purveyors of the subjects we are paid to teach. There are favoured forms of reasoning and rhetoric in discipline knowledge that we must make visible to students in our talk, our pedagogies and our assessment practices. This means interacting to guide learners toward fuller and more apposite engagement with texts and greater explicitness about lines of argument that we value. In L1 English, this means mentoring students into strategies of reframing, symbolic abstraction, text axiology and composition in interpretation.

And because schools are social institutions, mentoring semogenesis is a task that is especially important for students whose class formations make them more vulnerable, less likely to recognize the tacit requirements of school learning. Boundary students are our gift and our profound responsibility. Those paid to induct them into the disciplines of schooling have a special role to play in this process. If teachers are paid to induct students into the meaning-making practices of the culture – and in particular its literacy practices – it helps if they have signposts guiding their mentoring and tracking of students' development. This paper represents one view of the possibilities for a social semiotic framework to inform this vital work.

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Appendix: *The Red-Back Spider* **(Based on a story by Peter Skrzynecki)**

The house in Carp Street was a fibro cottage built on a sloping block of land, the foundations at the back being high enough for a child to stand under and an adult to crouch or sit down.

   Except for its weeds, the yard was almost bare, empty of bushes or trees. A few geraniums straggled out of the cracked earth down one side of the house, under a window. The weeds were dried yellow, brown, and white by the hot summer sun. They grew densely at the back and more sparsely towards the front and down the sides of the house; patches of reddish-orange clay blended in with them. This was the

'gardening' my mother had been employed for. Her task was to clear the yard of weeds and stack them; later, they all had to be burnt. My mother had been recommended by Mrs Hunter, the owner of a farm where she worked as a domestic servant while we lived in a migrant hostel in the central west of New South Wales after our arrival in Australia. My father was living in Sydney and working for the Water Board as a pipe-layer-although he used to come by train once a month, to visit us.

The lady of the house, Mrs Burnett, a widow, was a bony woman whose brown-as-leather skin hung over her frame like a synthetic material and gave her an appear-ance of being fleshless. She spoke shrilly, bird-like, peering over her glasses as if my mother and I were hard of hearing. Despite her appearance, she did not seem to be very old. As she spoke, she pointed with a crooked finger.

'The gardening implements are under the house. You may stack the weeds over there, in the left corner. They must be burnt when they are dried out. I shall pay you at the end of the day. -Thank you. -Oh yes! The child may stay with you providing he does not become a hindrance.'

With that she hurried away, but at the top of the steps she closed the door slowly, deliberately, with a metallic click, as if to establish the necessary barrier that must exist unspoken between mistress and servant.

According to my mother the work would take two or three days, and these she would slot in between the days she worked for Mrs Hunter. As it was the period before Christmas, school at the hostel was finished and I was allowed to accompany her. We would catch the bus from the camp to the centre of town, then walk among the shops and houses with tiny rural gardens, past the post office, police station, and courthouse, skirt the hospital grounds and walk around the hill with a War Memorial on top, its pale blue light burning all night and into the early hours of the morning. Carp Street lay at the end of this circuit.

On the first day, while my mother worked, I played in the dirt and among the weeds, with two small rectangular blocks of wood that were imaginary cars: making tracks and roads. When the sun became too hot I would go under the house, continu-ing my game there. My mother wore a broad-brimmed straw hat and made me a cap by tying knots in the four ends of a handkerchief. We drank water from the tap by the back steps next to an outside toilet. We had our sandwiches for lunch under the house together in the cool.

There were boxes and cases under the house, some nailed and some shut; and when my mother returned to work after lunch, I found an open one. Inside, to my surprise, were toy animals of all kinds: sheep, cows, horses, pigs. There were soldiers too - standing at attention, firing rifles, attacking, charging with bayonets. Magically, as if in a dream, they became part of another dimension, a contrast to the world outside in the dirt and weeds. At last I had some real toys!

In the shade, under the floorboards, a new world of experience opened up to me that afternoon, as I made an imaginary farm and invented a war that my soldiers fought to the death to win. Talking to myself, giving orders and calling to animals, I became totally immersed in my games.

Then, at one point, as I galloped a brown horse through a scattering of weeds, there was a cry from my mother and I rushed over to the side fence where she was kneeling. 'Zarazliwy!' she cried.

The word meant 'poisonous' and I recoiled instantly.

Under a beam of the paling fence where the spade could not reach, between a small rusty tin and the ground, was a spider's web. Hung in its centre, like a black pearl, was a red-back spider, glistening in the sun, the red stripe on its back even more brilliant than the glossy black dome. Its front legs were raised, slender and fine, like a dancer's.

My mother held up a hand in caution. 'Uwazaj " she warned. Be careful.

With a stick she started to extract the spider awkwardly from its sticky web, but in the blink of an eye it scurried into the tin, its slim legs becoming a blur of movement.

Turning over the tin, my mother indicated the egg sacs of yellow-brown silk. 'Inside are its eggs', she said. 'Hundreds of them.' Peering over her shoulder I wondered why the spider had to hide its eggs like that, in a rusty tin under the fence among the weeds. What was wrong with laying them out in the sunlight, where they could warm more easily? Birds made their nests out in the open, in the trees; a butterfly spun its chrysalis and left it on a branch. Was it because it was poisonous, or was there something evil in its nature that it had to hide?

Without speaking my mother prodded the inside of the tin with a stick.
'Did you kill it?' I asked.

'I don' t know, but we must make sure. It is a poisonous kind.'

She dropped dry weeds into the tin and pushed them in with a stick. Taking a box of matches from the pocket of her apron she dropped a lit match into the tin.

A tongue of fire rose up; wispy smoke curled in its wake, slowly becoming thicker.

Where is the spider? I thought. Why doesn't it come running out?

'What is the matter?'

It was Mrs Bumett; she stood behind us, her eyes straining in the sunlight, peering at us as if we had green skin.

'Spider', my mother replied. 'Black-with red on back.'

'Oh, I see… Very well, you may continue.'

Turning around, I stepped back to look at her.

'What is that you have, boy – in your shirt pocket?'

It was the galloping brown horse I was playing with when my mother called out. I must have put it into my pocket.

My mother stood up, wiping the sweat from her eyes.

'He not take the horse… He only put it in pocket.' She took out the horse and handed it to Mrs Burnett.

'You found the suitcase, I see. Please return all the toys and do not play with them.'

She took the horse and clasped it in her hand like it was a precious stone; then she returned to the house, went up the steps and clicked the door behind her like she had done that morning.

In the last few moments I had forgotten the spider; suddenly, I remembered. 'The spider! The spider!'

At our feet the fire had gone out; smoke rose from the tin and its contents were a small heap of ashes, barely distinguishable from the blackened interior.

We both knelt down on the hot earth.

'There is no more spider', my mother said. She tipped over the tin and scattered its contents with her foot. Then she picked up the tin on the end of the stick and carried it over to the garbage bin next to the toilet. It fell in with a clunk and she dropped the lid with a clatter, as if she did not care whether it made a noise or not.

She began to talk about something different, something that had nothing to do at all with the events of a few minutes earlier. But I could tell she was upset, that she was only pretending, distracting herself so as not to become upset. She was sad, I could tell that by the tone of her voice. Although I could not bring myself to ask why, I knew it was nothing to do with the spider.

QUESTION

- Although the story is called The Red-Back Spider it ends with the words '…I knew it was nothing to do with the spider'.
- What do you think the story is about?
- How does the writer make it an effective story?