Teaching and Learning with Picturebooks: Developing Multimodal Literacy with a Community of Primary School Teachers in China

Authors : Fuling Deng

Abstract : Today's children are frequently exposed to multimodal texts that adopt diverse modes to communicate myriad meanings within different cultural contexts. To respond to the new textual landscape, scholars have considered new literacy theories which propose picturebooks as important educational resources. Picturebooks are multimodal, with their meaning conveyed through the synchronisation of multiple modes, including linguistic, visual, spatial, and gestural acting as access to multimodal literacy. Picturebooks have been popular reading materials in primary educational settings in China. However, often viewed as "easy" texts directed at the youngest readers, picturebooks remain on the margins of Chinese upper primary classrooms, where they are predominantly used for linguistic tasks, with little value placed on their multimodal affordances. Practices with picturebooks in the upper grades in Chinese primary schools also encounter many challenges associated with the curation of texts for use, designing curriculum, and assessment. To respond to these issues, a qualitative study was conducted with a community of Chinese primary teachers using multi-methods such as interviews, focus groups, and documents. The findings showed the impact of the teachers' increased awareness of picturebooks' multimodal affordances on their pedagogical decisions in using picturebooks as educational resources in upper primary classrooms.
Keywords : picturebook education, multimodal literacy, teachers' response to contemporary picturebooks, community of practice

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