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A Tree in Her Backyard... Literary-aesthetic Classroom Settings during Second Language Acquisition with Picturebooks

Abstract: Picturebooks are an essential tool in early literacy programs to foster first language acquisition. Hence, supporting second language acquisition through pictures seems obvious. Using symbolic and iconic features to produce meaning not only links to visual literacy, but also to the stimulation of students' imagination. Interactions with pictures can become a key factor to reveal students' mental processes and the role of the learners' first language experiences. This paper focuses on the possibilities for second language acquisition that exist and how they foster visual literacy in primary school classrooms. The insights here outlined are based on a classroom project with primary school students with refugee backgrounds. The project design was based on the picturebook *Seasons* by Blexbolex, which offers various associations linked to spring, summer, fall and winter. In the book each season is represented by a series of images, captioned with one single word. Since the illustrator sums up the circle of life in the name of childhood, the classroom project aimed at collecting individual anecdotes from the students. During the lessons diverse learning activities were created, not only to get the students to aesthetically engage with the picturebook, but also to focus on their usefulness as a scaffolding context for language learning.

Keywords: second language acquisition, picturebook, reader response, literary-aesthetic learning, visual literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

In this article I argue that literary-aesthetic classroom settings have an impact on primary school students' second language acquisition by reverting to their general knowledge, experiences, and emotions in their native languages. My attempt to show the benefit of literary-aesthetic experiences with picturebooks is theoretically underpinned by research theory in cognitive/educational psychology, second language acquisition, and literature.

I generally follow Wolfgang Iser's understanding of reader response criticism as well as Vygotsky's statement that social interaction is based on shared experiences, which people mediate. Furthermore, Perry Nodelman's and Maria Nicolajeva's research on picturebooks and Lawrence R. Sipe's research on reader response serve as a theoretical foundation whilst Ernst Apeltauer's research on vocabulary development clarifies the relevance of learning and teaching strategies that consider first language experiences.

Despite the already existing work relating to second language acquisition, social development and picturebook theories, research has hardly turned towards literary-aesthetics learning with picturebooks during second language acquisition. In the following, I will focus on the gap by exploring the impact of a picturebook project in two different transitional classes in a primary school with students at the age from six to twelve. Using the picturebook *Seasons* by Blexbolex in the classroom, the setting was designed in regard to the book and the second language learner's needs to ideally communicate their responses.

In five sessions, this project provided various points of view on second language acquisition and understanding of readers' responses. The purpose of this project was to explore the following question:

In what way do literary-aesthetic experiences influence primary school students' second language acquisition?

In order to address this question multiple data sources such as observation, students' documents (e.g. pictures, notes) and interviews were used and qualitatively analyzed to develop a comprehensive understanding and generate possible clues, hoping that the analysis would allow some initial insights into the question.

2. THE PICTUREBOOK: SEASONS BY BLEXBOLEX

First published under the title *Saisons* (OV in French 2009), Blexbolex' picturebook was counted among the *10 best illustrated Children's Books of 2010* of the *New York Times Book Review* and listed as one of the *7 Best Books for Young Readers* by *Deutschlandfunk* in the same year.

The *New York Times* wrote: "Blexbolex's silkscreened prints are both retro and modern, and at 180 pages, 'Seasons' is an impressive object the reader will want to study closely" (Just 2010).

Although the illustrations are created digital, the pictures are presented with a kind of retro flavor. The educated and/or adult reader and viewer might be reminded of Art Deco posters from the 1920s to 1940s, well known in advertising. Blexbolex, alias Bernard Granger, achieves this reference to visual culture by recycling past styles. Each of the three print colors is applied in a separate step. The colors might therefore seem transparent, which mediates aesthetic modes of nostalgic representations of childhood.

In Blexbolex' picturebook *Seasons* the first four spreads depict the same landscape during each season with a single word or phrase in bold block-letters and a picture on each page to mediate meaning. However, the point of view might change the definition: "Plum" in font and picture could just symbolize the fruit, while the dried fruit turns into a "Prune" and ends in the background of the representation of "Harvest". The illustrator leads the reader and viewer through the circle of life with associations related to the four seasons such as "Spring Fever", "A Watermelon", "Autumn Leaf", and "Tranquility". The pictures are titled, and the titles are visualized. Fonts and pictures present an orchestration of two different notations. Because of the schematic style the pictures represent objects, activities and feelings as iconic signs. Each page graphically shows the seasons, collects memories or associations, and pictures the process of growing up related to the circle of life. With reference to Nathalie op de Beeck Blexbolex' *Seasons* can be a distillation "of childhood and of universal advice for all children" (2018: 19), but "shifting methods of interpreting information and perceiving childhood change the very picture-text relationship itself" (2018: 25). The reader is invited to explore the periodic nature of time, but whether they recall the past, cherishes nostalgic moments or mediates new meaning is up to them.

While some juxtaposed pages seem to present a congruence between verbal and visual signs such as "Harvest" and "Prune", others such as "Night" and "Web" do not present obvious related information. The reader/viewer must use strategies such as searching for clues in the pictures to discover the literary links between the single pages. Juxtaposed pages such as "Night" and "Web" reveal their relationship only at second glance. Taking a closer look "Night" reveals a flying witch on a broom whilst a spider's web ("Web") links more narratively. Building coherence and cohesion, readers/viewers construct meaning interactively embedded in the author's/illustrator's artwork. Framing the narration with the title "Seasons" and the analogy to an imaginary childhood the author/illustrator leads the implied audience (Nikolajeva 2005: 255) on a journey of several years. While Blexbolex stages childhood memories framed by the circle of life, the sequence of events is, in paratextual terms, presented linear. Turning one page after another the reader/viewer follows the irreversible flow of time and the construction of this temporal order. The narrated events are arranged chronologically in temporal sequences, but in terms of successive narrative events the story is shaped in concentric circles. Spring, summer, fall, and winter repeat itself over a period of four years.

3. THEORETICAL APPROACH: READER'S RECEPTION AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Dealing with picturebooks in school contexts provides special possibilities in relation to literary learning and language acquisition. A picturebook like *Seasons* by Blexbolex (2010) is able to adapt a unique key qualification in the

mediation of visual and literary reception competence due to highly complex picture-text-interdependencies. According to Petra Wieler picturebook stories support language acquisition by structuring literary discussions of mental images (2013: 261 f.). In addition, using visual images increases comprehension, links to previous experiences, and provides literary-aesthetic learning possibilities. Literary, linguistic and picture-related learning encourages mainly the children's imagination. In doing so, imaginations influence and refer back to perceptions. Kaspar Spinner stresses the importance of those parts of literary learning which focus on subjectifying processes such as being able to attentively observe linguistic presentation („sprachliche Gestaltung aufmerksam wahrnehmen“), retrace perspectives of fictitious characters („Perspektiven literarischer Figuren nachvollziehen“), and understand metaphorical and symbolistic phraseology („metaphorische und symbolische Ausdrucksweise verstehen“), which helps to develop one's own communicative competences (Spinner 2006). Especially in conversation, perceptive impressions of picture-text relationships in picturebooks can be differentiated if verbalized. Furthermore, the different possibilities of perspectives demonstrate the ambiguity of art. In discourse, one is able to add new approaches and expand current concepts. The reflection of one's own perception particularly happens when the recipient is not confronted with familiar pictures. In this case the glance focuses due to visual challenges on linking relations and contexts to generate meaning (Dehn 2007: 12).

Correspondingly Blexbolex' *Seasons* evokes a variety of readings and interpretations by involving the reader's imagination. "Both words and images leave room for the readers/viewers to fill with their previous knowledge, experience, and expectations, and we may find infinite possibilities for word-image interaction" (Nicolajeva/Scott 2006: 2). According to Wolfgang Iser readers have to bridge textual gaps or blanks while reading a text. In filling the gaps, readers also contribute to the construction of a text's meaning. Since this allows one to interpret the narrative individually, it makes the reader/viewer a coauthor.

The reader fills in the blank in the text, thereby bringing about a referential field; the blank arising in turn out of the referential field is filled in by way of the theme-and-background structure; and the vacancy arising from juxtaposed themes and backgrounds is occupied by the reader's standpoint, from which the various reciprocal transformations lead to the emergence of the aesthetic object. The structural qualities outlined make the blank shift, so that the changing positions of the empty space mark out a definite need for determination, which the constitutive activity of the reader is to fulfill. In this sense, the shifting blank maps out the path along which the wandering viewpoint is to travel, guided by the self-regulatory sequence in which the structural qualities of the blank interlock. (Iser 1993: 40)

Readers/viewers of Blexbolex' *Seasons* will read differently, not only by using individual experiential repertoires to reconstruct the narrative, but also by

approaching the titled pictures in different conventions. Leafing through the book backwards and forwards the reader/viewer may be captured by the picturebook and stimulated to various interpretations.

As reading is a communicative process, the reader's/viewer's reception is not only based upon the text but includes their knowledge of the world and previous experiences. Within the framework of communities' experiences are communicated based on shared general knowledge. "This requires generalization" (Vygotsky 1987: 48). Therefore, signs are developed in cooperation of how we communicate with each other and how we construct meaning. They exist as image schemas and representations of the world, in peoples' minds (Johnson/Lakoff 1999). Referring to Vygotsky it is signs and meaning, which allow social interactions.

Picturebooks in literary-aesthetic classroom settings provide an insight into language as a conventional system of signs. Between pictures, words and narrative language is revealed in its form and function as representation, expression, and appeal. Experience and memories of the real world consequently tie in the adaption of semantics (Dehn 2014). As aesthetic objects picturebooks support due to their picture-text relationship visual and verbal literacy. As Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles describe a picturebook involving "thinking in, and communicating through, both pictures and words" (2012: 56) as key to understand the relation between the signified and the signifier. The presented information from visual and verbal signs enables to construct meaning and influence strongly ideas of language structure and functions. According to Andresen & Funke, written fixation of spoken language generates a visual model of language (2006: 440).

In these respects, teachers' questions, reactions to students' thoughts, modeling, and scaffolding provide students with different ways in which to engage with the narrative. This includes creating mental images through associating and placing new words into a context. Through this the effects of literary-aesthetic learning are influenced by the classroom setting. Furthermore, classroom settings in second language acquisition provide an excellent opportunity for teachers to advance vocabulary acquisition through shared literary experiences with picturebooks. One of the main questions posed in context of modelling language comprehension is, whether and how visual information influences lexical access. Referring to Perry Nodelman picturebooks "offer us a sort of dictionary of visual ideas, a set of labeled images by which we can identify the objects we actually see" (Nodelman 1989: 203). It is assumed that vocabulary acquisition is related to experiences, which is why meaning develops simultaneously to experience and language use. Thus, because semantic knowledge is linked to experience (Apeltauer 2012: 17), language should be acquired through language use, considering all senses to establish learning situations, in which students are able to experience meaning in different ways. By doing so, links between first and following languages are provided, already existing

knowledge of the world is activated, and students can refer to it. Acquisition of vocabulary takes place as an opportunity to reflect and process own experiences and incidents (Apeltauer 2012: 20). In Vygotsky's words:

Meaning is not the sum of all the psychological operations which stand behind the word. Meaning is something more specific – it is the internal structure of the sign operation. It is what is lying between the thought and the word. Meaning is not equal to the word, not equal to the thought. (Vygotsky 1997: 133)

Several factors must be considered in regard to recording new words. Along with the learning situation, which can be modelled by audios, visuals or simply examples, the word group, word category, the spacing and the timing are all factors on which the acquisition depends.

In contrast, words with an emotional connotation that were encountered in an emotional situation can be fast-tracked into long-term memory. The more the senses are involved while encountering a word, the more it assists with creating a record of that word. (Schütze 2016: 152)

The word gets its content, meaning and purpose as individual experiences concentrate and integrate themselves in generalized form in your consciousness. This process of development of meaning stretches out over your whole life. One term can never be fully complete in that sense but will constantly be complemented, upgraded or corrected based on new experiences (Jampert 2013: 27). Thusly language enables to systemize, organize, and eventually communicate experiences.

The characteristic of picturebooks is the presented relation of word and object, signifier and signified, framed pragmatically by the narration. These different representations of the same meaning could support students to acquire vocabulary in literary discussions (Bertschi-Kaufmann 2007) and enable them to verbalize experiences in literature and with pictures (Thiele 2003: 180). According to paraverbal and nonverbal information in communication pictures in picturebooks can function as emotional interpretations. It is therefore likely that second language acquisition may be supported by using visual texts. Language is given in color and form – an additional emotional connotation. Eilam posits

that interpreting VRs [visual representation] involves both cognitive and affective processes. Thus, the internal-external dimension and the cognitive-affective dimension can be seen as two additional facets of duality. (Eilam 2012: Xiv)

Especially literary discussions offer a lot of opportunities to verbalize, sort out, and compare different perceptions of meaning and interpretations of narration in word and pictures. Different points of view illustrate the ambiguity in art and the perceptions of others may enrich own concepts already in existence (Dehn 2014). In communication students may be able to reflect

from their own point of view on the meaning, discuss perspectives of others, and process figuring it out. Whilst playfully acquiring and dealing with the world, enculturation- and socialisation-processes are being initiated constructively.

Referring to Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer literacy skills should be enhanced through aesthetics learning while engaging “with the child’s maturing cognitive abilities” (Kümmerling-Meibauer/Meibauer 2013: 143). Therefore, the educational context and the teacher are obliged to scaffold the learner by actions that turn that in-between moment, of learning and comprehending, into something understandable. And as Sandie Mourao puts it using picturebooks in second language classrooms uses “the potential of picturebooks for providing authentic reasons for language use, discussion and above all for prompting thinking through response” (Mourão 2016: 26) in a second language. Their purpose could be described first of all authentic in their language use and in their potential to initiate reader responses, which Sipe (2000) categorizes in five different ways: analytical, intertextual, personal, transparent, and performative.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHOD

The research source was two different transitional classes in a primary school in Berlin, Germany. The students of the transitional classes in which the picturebook project was implemented learned German as their second or third language for a few lessons every day, while for the rest of the school day they were fully integrated in regular classes. The students who immigrated to Germany for different reasons learned from grades 1 to 3 and 4 to 6 together. Hence, because of the difference in age, language, cognitive development, knowledge of the world and experiences the group was very heterogeneous. The design of lessons needed to consider the differences, which is why in grade 1 to 3 and grade 4 to 6 it was varied.

Students in grade 1 to 3 were at the age of six to ten, while the age in grade 4 to 6 ranged from twelve to thirteen. In class 1 to 3 were four girls and two boys and the class 4 to 6 counted three girls and boys each. None of the children spoke German at home, but most of the students grew up in a multilingual environment. Some of the students attended the transitional classes more than a year, some half a year and others just started at the beginning of the project. Not all of the students have experienced traumatic events, but one ten-year-old girl had to flee from Syria with her family. She experienced living in a refugee camp as well in Jordan before arriving in Berlin. Twin sisters (12 years old) lost their father to a severe illness. Their family left Romania to seek medical care. Two girls (age 6 and 9) from Bulgaria and Moldova were continuously exhausted due to the poor conditions in the emergency shelters for refugees they lived in with their family.

Over the course of five days in spring 2016, the transitional classroom students participated in a picturebook project concerning Blexbolex' *Seasons*. Every day for at least 90 minutes the students participated in the following activities:

On the first day the teachers introduced the picturebook, while selected pages were the focus of attention to encourage children to remember their own experiences and knowledge about summer, fall, winter, and spring. The students had to find words and communicate their experiences while remembering their own childhood stories. The teachers asked the students what they knew about the represented word, what experiences they had with it, what they imagined, and to what season they would match it. In this regard the students arranged the selected pages of the picturebook on the ground in the form of a circle of the seasons. Afterwards the students connected their own birthdays¹ to the circle of life and noted visually and verbally what they associated with it. A lesson regarding two different multicultural holidays celebrating the coming of spring followed. Next, they explored when, who, what, and how the holidays were celebrated? The classroom setting for primary school students of the transition class grades 1 to 3 included much singing, playing, and learning through body movements and sensations such as using props like actions and songs, mediating new vocabulary and meaning. Focusing on "seasons" and "growing up", the session contained different activities: searching for eggs to mediate the meaning of "hide" and "seek" and planting plants to experience "growing up". For the students of the transition class grades 4 to 6 the method was mostly based on literary discussions. The next day, the lessons focused mainly on weather. In this context, the students designed a current weather forecast. Comparing the time of birth of oviparous animals and their hatching, the students sorted the different stages of several oviparous animals chronologically on a poster and posed questions: How long does the breeding period last? Do parents and children look alike? Which stages of development do we see? Having prepared the vocabulary the students visited the *MACH!mit* children's museum in Berlin for the yearly Easter exhibition "Das Gelbe vom Ei – Küken schlüpfen im Museum" [Egg Yolk – Chicks Hatching in the Museum]. All students attended a private guided tour. The lessons were concluded by drawing pictures of one's favourite season, which the students explained in interviews. In the transitional class 4 to 6 teachers and students drafted an interview with questions and answers, so that the students would be able to interview each other in pairs.

The regular teachers Claudia Hofer / Helga Kuipers (1–3), Stefanie Wohman (4–6) and the researcher Farriba Schulz implemented the classroom project in each class as a team. Based on participating and non-participating observation, such as video recording, the material allowed them to reflect on the pro-

¹ The teachers had prepared the information about birthday dates in advance.

cess of language learning considering verbal and nonverbal aspects (Schramm 2014: 243) and identify significant features of how teachers and learners participate in literary-aesthetic classroom settings. The series of lessons was analyzed based on participant and non-participant observation as well as on documents that were produced during lessons, and short interviews with the primary school students themselves. Based on a social constructivist perspective, common in qualitative research designs, key events² were identified.

5. ANALYSIS

By means of selected examples, I will provide an insight into the findings below and demonstrate how literary-aesthetic experiences can influence primary school students' second language acquisition. A sociocultural perspective on language considers language learning to be embedded in a communicative context and therefore, using picturebooks in second language classrooms, students may benefit from exploring meaningful narratives.

5.1. LITERARY DISCUSSIONS

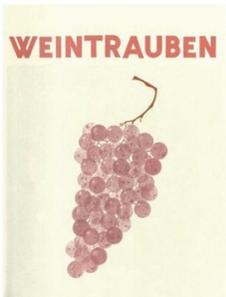


Figure 1 – Grape
(Blexbolex 2010)

During the literary discussions, the students of the transition class grades 4 to 6 attributed meanings to the illustrations and shared their experiences that were evoked by the pictures and showed several personal responses. When shown the page with a watermelon, for instance, the students immediately associated summer with it, eating ice cream, swimming in the pool and: days during the summer are longer. When shown the page with grapes (see fig. 1) they mostly told about experiences with their grandparents' and shared memories of beverages made from fruits:

Boy 1: When I go to Serbia eh in this village, my grandma and grandpa (incrompehensive) and my grandma take something sweet (gestures drinking motion), then my sister and my father and my mother, they have to eat (gestures to his mouth) and drink a little bit of alcohol, but only a little.

Teacher 1: Yes, it can be used as medicine (laughing).
(...)

² „A key event is key in the researcher assumes intuitively that the event chosen has the potential to make explicit a theoretical loading. A key event is key in that it brings o awareness latent, intuitive judgements the analyst has already made about salient patterns in the data. Once brought to awareness these judgements can be reflected upon critically” (Erickson 1985, 108 In: Kroon/Sturm 2007, 3).

- Boy 2: Making grapes
- Girl 2: Making grapes (incomprehensive) I have at home this sweet juice with apple my mum has them in this all winter in (gestures a form of a jar)
- Teacher 1: Machine?
- Girl 2: Not machine this small – not cup – it's (gestures something bigger and round)
- Teacher 1: A bowl?
- Girl2: Yes, and all the winter it is there and in the summer it is very sweet
- (...)
- Boy 1: My grandpa has a farm there are pigs. When we are there he kills, and we eat.
- Teacher 1: Mmh, he slaughters the pigs.
- (...)
- Girl 3: My grandma (incomprehensive) makes always something sweet eh sour cherries
- Teacher 1: A juice?
- Girl 3: Yes, a juice, but she makes it very sweet. She puts a very big bowl and then sugar (gestures pouring sugar into a bowl) and for two or three days
- Teacher 1: I see, and then it's like marmalade? (gestures motion with a whisk)
- Girl 3: No, then the sugar fades und then there's is just (incomprehensive).
- Teacher 2: Like a syrup?
- Girl 3: Yes
- Teacher 2: And then you can mix the syrup with water and you have lemonade?
- Girl 3: Yes

It seemed as if everybody experienced a close relationship to their grandparents, living in the countryside, and having a farm. The students talked about planting, harvesting, and growing up with animals such as chicken and pigs, and their grandparents growing grapes and making wine, liqueur, and syrup. Referring to Sipe (2000) the students responded personally from the text to their own lives. In the conversations with other students they developed meaning and exchanged individual stories. Therefore, the sharing of perspectives offered several opportunities to enhance meaning, which in turn facilitates building links between the first and following languages and initiating opportunities to reflect on experiences.

As we showed the picture of the grapes to the transition class grades 1 to 3, in turn, one six-year-old girl from Bulgaria immediately associated a symbolic ges-

ture we did while singing a song³ about seasons in previous lessons. To prompt the meaning of fall then, we would simulate picking grapes and putting them in our mouths, which was the exact gesture she imitated, when she saw the image. The image didn't trigger any past childhood memory as substantial like we encountered in the transition class grades 4 to 6, but instead she linked the picture to her experience she recently had with singing a song in class. Every student mediated their imaginations. Even though the classroom setting for everyone was based on Blexbolex' Seasons students' associations were different.



Figure 2 – Circle of life



Figure 3 – Bird's Nest



Figure 4 – Nest
(Blexbolex 2010)



Figure 5 – Winter



Figure 6 – Pregnant
Woman

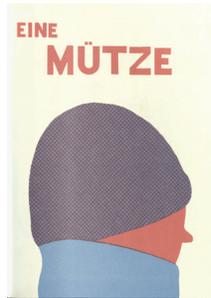


Figure 7 – Hat
(Blexbolex 2010)



Figure 8 – Hat



Figure 9 – Iceman
(Blexbolex 2010)



Figure 10 – Iceman



Figure 11 – Seasons
(Blexbolex 2010)



Figure 12 – Tree in her
backyard

³ There once was a mother, who had four children: spring, summer, fall and winter. Spring-time brings flowers, summer brings clover, fall brings grapes and winter the snow.

5.2. SEASONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF BIRTHDAYS

G geared to this kind of schematic representations of varied aspects of seasons the students of the transition class grades 1 to 3 created their individual representations of their birthdays, simultaneously integrating their notes and pictures into the circle of life (see fig. 2). A tree with a bird's nest in March symbolizing spring (see fig. 3 + 4), a skate, ski and a snowman in February standing for winter (see fig. 5) and a pregnant woman (see fig. 6) in August were not only images but used as signs. The verbal text and numbers were therefore used to inform group members about their individual birthdays. Students of the transition class grades 4 to 6 also made representations of their birthday. Each notation shows a different approach. While some of the student's pictures used Blexbolex' illustrations (see fig. 7) as direct templates (see fig. 8), others copied the picturebook's visualization such as the ice-cream man (see fig. 9) as well, but extended the illustration through narrative strategies (see fig. 10). As the text of one of the student's visualization says, "celebrating a birthday"; "going swimming pool"; "playing football" the image of summer is clearly mediated. But the picture the student drew changed into a livelier scene as he included speech bubbles containing the following text: "offer 1 € one ice cream" and "everything" (see fig. 10). Suddenly the phrases, the drawing, and the speech provided an audiovisual insight into the student's imagination. As shown above, the students communicated by using signs and constructed meaning in relation to their individual experiences.

5.3. VISUALIZATION OF CHILDHOOD

In another situation in the transition class grades 4 to 6 one picture in the Blexbolex' picturebook made an especially strong impression on one student. The representation of the four seasons in one tree (see fig. 11) a thirteen-year old girl felt brought her back to her childhood memories. The girl came from Bulgaria, was bilingual in Bulgarian and Turkish, and had already had English lessons at school back in Bulgaria. She joined the transition class at the beginning of the project. She and another girl interviewed each other based on questions and answers that were drafted before in class. Written on a poster and pinned to the wall were questions such as "Which season did you paint?", "Why did you paint this season?", "By what have you been inspired?". Bullet points in order to respond supported the students during their interviews.

Girl 1: Who gave you the idea?

Girls 2: I am reading a book and I have these pictures (shows drawings) and I have to do it.

Girl 1: Yeah that is.

Girl 2: Thanks

Teacher: But but yes wait. I'm interested in why you drew it all in ONE tree while you could have drawn JUST summer or JUST spring?

Girl 2: Because uhm, was in my child. My grandmother has a big house at home. Big tree and this tree has one very cold and one very warm and if summer one goes and one does not in summer one isn't as green but dark green and one is light green. My grandmother said everything in this tree is a big seasons. I love this tree I have to make this tree.

Girl 1: Ah I know! The sun reaches one side... but not the other one (incomprehensive)

Choosing the same motive Blexbolex' picturebook presents, the girl had as well painted a tree, symbolizing all four seasons in one tree, which she related to memories at her grandmother's (see fig. 12). The visualization and description in the interview reveal the girl's clear personal response. Her picture depicts not only her childhood memories, such as her grandmother and the big garden with a special tree, under which she played with other children, but something very meaningful to her, as well. As she cited her grandmother loosely translated describing the tree as an allegory for seasons, she both summoned a concept concerning the term "season", and communicated something personal: her experiences, her relationships, her feelings and therefore an important part of her.

6. CONCLUSION

Picturebooks like Blexbolex' *Seasons* challenge the reader in the sense of being an active participant in creating meaning as co-author. The reader is required to recognize visual codes, interpret them in their relation(s), fill in blanks, and thus is engaged co-constructively. Literary-aesthetic classroom settings during second language acquisition with picturebooks like this cannot be underestimated. In spite of the extended research on picturebook reading with young children very few studies have addressed the visual aspect of picturebooks for second language acquisition, especially those that consider challenging multimodal texts. Findings from the classroom setting also demonstrate student's opportunities to communicate already known concepts and experiences in the second language. While semantic knowledge is tied to experiences, the classroom setting allowed students to gain and construct the meaning of words through different senses, verbalize imaginations, and communicate their personal experiences verbally and visually. Thus, language use through an authentic context provoked personal reader responses.

This project was not able to accurately show the development of second language acquisition from the start, due to the short term of only five days. It rather represents approaches that may impact literary-aesthetic learning, in

context of second language acquisition. A following long-term project, however, literary-aesthetically accompanied by literary discussions and visual and written responses, might be able to focus closer on the development of language acquisition. Collecting the students' responses in the course of a year, would finally form a calendar and forge new childhood memories.

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