Effects of Textual Abridging on Meaning and Characterization in Sherlock Holmes:
- The Illustrated Version -

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シャーロックホームズの作品が持つ意味と特徴における簡略化テキストの影響—コミック版を対象に—

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要約

最近、原書のテキストから簡略したテキストを授業で使用することが推奨されている。最近の研究では、この簡略化されたテキストが原本と同様に真の学習経験を第二言語学習者に提供していることを多くの研究者が示唆している。しかし、簡略化されたテキストの効用、つまり意味、背景、人物に関するテキストの持つ重要な特徴に関しては、ほとんど研究されていない。そこで、この研究では、簡略化テキスト自体が原書のテキストが持つ潜在的な独自性をどのように変更され、この変更に対して機能的な文法表現をどのように採用されているかを研究することを目的とする。この研究を通じて、アーサー・コナン・ドイル（Arthur Conan Doyle）の‘The Copper Beeches’の冒頭部分を抽出し、そのオープニングの表現をリチャード・ゲアリー（Richard Geary）の簡略テキストを使用し比較する。さらに、これらの発見が授業に対してどのような意義があるのかを検討していく。

Abstract

Abridged versions of original texts are now being recommended for classroom use. Current research suggests that these simplified texts give the second language learner an authentic learning experience similar to the original text. However, little research has been done to investigate the effects textual abridging has on key textual features such as meaning, setting and characterization. This study suggests that abridging can significantly change these underlying textual features and that systemic functional grammar can be used to illustrate these changes. In order to demonstrate these findings this study will compare a text extract taken from the opening of the Arthur Conan Doyle mystery ‘The Copper Beeches’ with the opening of an illustrated abridged version by Richard Geary. Finally, this study will discuss the significance of these findings for the classroom.
1 INTRODUCTION

Textual abridging has become common not only in society in general, from movies to video games, but also in language classrooms. In language classrooms abridged versions of original texts, both written and illustrated, are recommended for general classroom use and extensive reading programs, see Day and Bamford for examples. According to research, abridged versions of original stories, theoretically, allow students to focus on the overall meaning of the text rather than discreet language items (Carrell and Carson 49-50). However, while extensive reading programs are clearly beneficial to language learners, little research has been done to examine exactly what effect abridging has on meaning setting, and characterization in the new simplified text.

Similarly, just as abridging is becoming more common in society in general and, by extension, in classrooms, so too is the use of visual images. Indeed, visual literacy is seen as being increasingly important in the modern classroom because literacy is going through fundamental changes that incorporate visual elements. Three main changes can be cited. First, modern day ubiquitous screen based digital texts (computers, mobile phones, tablet PCs) combine both written and visual reading paths (Kress 16-34). Second, technology has made it very easy for written texts to incorporate visual features such as bullet points, spreadsheets, and pictures (Kress 16-23). Third, popular media texts that may not have been considered useful thirty years ago (e.g., comic books and computer games) are now being recommended as essential to the modern curriculum (Bhatia 279-297). However, while an understanding of visual literacy is important more research is needed to show how visuals can be combined with words to create there overall meaning and how they can most effectively be used in the classroom, see Unsworth for a fuller treatment of this issue.

Given this context, why, then, has little research been done in these two developing areas of abridging and visual literacy? An answer may lie in the difficulty in conducting comparisons and evaluations. Thus, while it is possible, using traditional grammar systems, to compare and evaluate sentences for how effective they are in terms of vocabulary or subject/verb usage it is difficult to compare and evaluate sentences, objectively, for how effective they are in terms of characterization or setting. Furthermore, if the text is multi-modal, i.e. combines a written modality (words for example) with a visual modality (images) in one text, comparison may be problematic. Here, it is difficult to compare written language with visual language because both languages follow different sets of rules. Words, sentences, paragraphs are created by following linear linguistic rules whereas images, designs, captions are created by following non-linear spatial rules.

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) offers a solution to the problems related to comparison and evaluation for both abridged texts and multi-modal texts. Thus, as will be shown in this paper, the SFG model can be used to compare and evaluate written texts for how effectively they create meaning or characterization or setting. In addition, in multi-modal texts, the SFG model allows the written and graphic systems to be separated and examined for their individual functions or for their
combined functions.

This SFG analysis will compare the style and communicative functionality of two text extracts. Text extract 1 (Fig 1) is taken from the opening of the Arthur Conan Doyle mystery ‘The Copper Beeches’. Text extract 2 (Fig 2) is taken from the opening of a comic book version, the illustrated abridged version by Richard Geary. The two texts have sufficient similarities to merit study. They share the same discourse domain, (literature/entertainment/education) and subject matter, an identical opening scene of the mystery. Indeed, they are representative of a type of texts that could be recommended for extensive reading programs, see Day and Bamford. However, as the analysis will show, the illustrated abridged version is significantly different from the original in its general stylistic properties and communicative functionality.

Figure 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Original Text – (Conan Doyle  272) Opening Paragraphs (words 140)</th>
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"To the man who loves art for its own sake," remarked Sherlock Holmes, tossing aside the advertisement sheet of the Daily Telegraph, "it is frequently in its least important and lowliest manifestations that the keenest pleasure is to be derived. It is pleasant to me to observe, Watson, that you have so far grasped this truth that in these little records of our cases which you have been good enough to draw up, and, I am bound to say, occasionally to embellish, you have given prominence not so much to the many causes celebres and sensational trials in which I have figured but rather to those incidents which may have been trivial in themselves, but which have given room for those faculties of deduction and of logical synthesis which I have made my special province."

"And yet," said I, smiling, "I cannot quite hold myself absolved from the charge of sensationalism which has been urged against my records."

Figure 2 – The Illustrated Abridged (Geary 4-5)
In order to show the similarities and differences between the texts, they will be examined from the three different but interconnected levels of Halliday’s ‘trinocular perspective’ on text (Halliday and Matthiessen 31): the textual, experiential, and interpersonal. However, this perspective is not wholly applicable to the visual elements of the illustrated abridged text because it was designed for use on texts with a written modality (Halliday and Matthiessen 20). Therefore, the analysis of the illustrated abridged text will be based on both the principles of SFG developed by Halliday for written text and the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen, which applied SFG principles to visual images. Consequently, the visual elements will also be examined from a trinocular perspective: the compositional function (related to the textual function); the representational function (related to the experiential function); and the interactive function (related to the interpersonal function).

Part 2, which follows this introduction, will provide an overview of the texts by summarizing their similarities and differences at the level of mode, field, and tenor. Part 3 will compare their experiential meanings and Part 4 will examine the interactive and representational meanings of the visual aspects of the illustrated abridged text. Part 5 will show how the interpersonal meanings of the texts are significantly different. Part 6 will compare the textual/compositional meanings. Finally, Part 7 will briefly outline the pedagogical implications of the study.

2 OVERVIEW OF THE TEXTS: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN MODE, FIELD AND TENOR

At a general level, the texts are very similar; they depict the initial opening scene using the same characters (Holmes and Watson) doing the same thing (discussing art) in the same location (221 Baker Street). The main difference between the texts is that while the illustrated abridged text features the elements associated with a traditional orientation, identifying the ‘time, place, persons, and their activity or the situation’ (Martin 157), the original text focuses on developing characterization. These differences can be explained, at least in part, by examining the modality of the texts (of course, other factors may have featured in the decisions behind the abridging -e.g. modern vs 19th century English- but these could only be shown through a wider study of the whole text).

At the level of mode, the illustrated abridged text, a modern text published 2005, in comic book form, cannot assume its readership will be familiar with the original characters and settings. Therefore, a traditional orientation is appropriate because while it will activate the Sherlock Holmes schema for readers familiar with the stories, it will also work as a general introduction for readers who are not. On the other hand, for the original text, a traditional orientation introducing location, setting, etc. would have been redundant because it was published in 1892 as No. 12 in the monthly serialization of Holmes stories.
Examining the role of language, the original text, which as a constitutive text only has words to create its story, uses the opening dialogue to create pictures of the two main characters in the minds/imagination of the reader. The illustrated abridged text however, as a comic book text, is predominately a visual text. Even though comic books have an ancillary relationship between words and images overall, it is the visual image that carries the communicative force of the text and the words work in support of images (McCloud 118-138; Eisner 122-138). Thus, cuts in the words of the opening dialogue, which condenses the characterization of Holmes and Watson, are necessary to focus on more visually stimulating orientating features of time, place, and setting (shown in more detail in Parts 3-6).

Consequently, although the openings of the stories portray the same scene, they occupy different short and long-term goals at the level of field, where field can be defined as the subject matter of the text. The original text is primarily concerned with establishing the main characters’ personalities. The illustrated abridged text is primarily concerned with introducing who the main characters are in relation to the setting of the forthcoming mystery.

Most interestingly, and significantly for pedagogical reasons, at the level of tenor (where tenor can be defined as the social roles and relationships of those involved in the process of communication), the illustrated abridged text changes the roles and status of the main characters. Thus, although Holmes occupies a more knowledgeable, powerful, and highly evaluative position than Watson in both texts, in the illustrated abridged text these aspects of his character are less developed. Likewise, although Watson occupies a less assertive and more defensive position than Holmes in both texts, he has far more parity in the illustrated abridged text than in the original text. This will be shown in detail in Parts 3-6.

3 THE EXPERIENTIAL MEANING OF THE WRITTEN TEXTS

The experiential function defines how language builds a representation of society in the minds of the receiver, in this case the reader. The abridged text, (Fig 3), contains a high experiential content of the kind normally associated with traditional orientations. First, it establishes the main characters’ names by using the vocatives “Sherlock Holmes and I”. Second, it establishes that the narrator of the story is Watson. Third, it establishes the domestic setting, (the behavioral process ‘sitting’), which will be disturbed by the coming mystery. Fourth, it establishes the circumstances, (cold morning, early spring, etc). These elements clearly establish a traditional orientation. However, the experiential function of the original text, although similar, is significantly different because many of the key linguistic elements are cut from the original text, shown in Fig 4.
Experiential Meanings

IT WAS (process-relational-attribute) A COLD EARLY MORNING IN EARLY SPRING (circumstances). Sherlock Holmes and I sat (process-behavioral) after breakfast on either side of a cheery fire in the old room at Baker Street (circumstances).

Key- Italics = process and circumstances Bold = different from original text, adapted from original story (Conan Doyle 272).

The original text uses the experiential elements to support an interpersonal objective, to establish, in the readers’ mind, characteristics of Holmes’ and Watson’s positions towards one another. Indeed, ‘tossing’ is the only material process that supports the world where the dialogue takes place, rather than the dialogue itself. Thus, Conan Doyle uses material processes metaphorically, to establish in the minds of the reader Holmes highly evaluative, judgmental nature; ‘grasping’ to represent the mental process of Watson being able to understand Holmes’ ‘truth’ tenuously; ‘hold’ to represent the mental process of Watson not being ‘absolved’ of Holmes’ charge.

In other material process, also cut form the illustrated abridged text, Watson is being accused of adding information to ‘the records’ (‘to embellish’). This is particularly damning considering the choice of noun ‘records’, which suggests factual accounts rather than stories which could legitimately be embellished. Moreover, using attributive relational process, Watson is accused of highlighting incidents of trivia (‘given prominence’) rather than more important cases. Furthermore, Holmes uses similar relational process to evaluate his own role positively. He has ‘figured’ in important events (‘the many causes celebres and sensational trials’) and ‘he has made’ his particular field the skills of ‘deduction and of logical synthesis’.
In the illustrated abridged text, however, these cut experiential elements, elements which are used to establish in the reader's mind Holmes character and his attitude towards Watson, are replaced by experiential elements that describe the physical reality of the world the mystery is going to take place in. Indeed, cutting these elements from the original dialogue does not just allow different experiential elements to appear in the illustrated abridged text, it also creates a visually more stimulating text. This will be shown in Part 4.

4 THE INTERACTIVE AND REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING OF THE ABRIDGED TEXT

In order to understand why the interpersonal dialogue, which orients the reader in the original text, may be challenging to present in the visual text, it is necessary to examine the interactive meaning of pictures in general. Interactive meaning can be equated with Halliday’s interpersonal function. Just as speakers react to each other and adopt interpersonal positions as they speak or write so do viewers adopt positions as they react to images (Jewitt and Oyama 145-146). In order to clarify this concept in the context of this paper, we must briefly compare how we send and receive messages in real life.

Comparing two real life social situations, listening to a lecture and engaging in a face-to-face conversation, the receivers of the information could be expected to react differently in the different social situations. In the lecture, the receiver of the information could be expected to be more detached, more analytical, perhaps more aware of their surroundings than the receiver of the information in the face-to-face conversation. In the face-to-face conversation, the receiver of the message could be expected to more emotionally attached to the sender of the information, more involved in what is actually being said and less likely to be aware of their surroundings. These two situations illustrate the underlying visual template behind what Kress and Van Leeuwen call ‘demand’ and ‘offer’ pictures (384).

The illustrated abridged text (Fig 6) can be defined as an offer picture. The viewer of the image is placed in a position similar to the receiver of the information in the lecture situation, at a detached distance from the image. At this level of detachment, the viewer is ‘expected’ (because this is a semiotic system visual language, like written language, is expected to release a potential meaning, although how the language is ultimately received will depend on the receiver’s ability to interpret it), to observe and analyze various elements in the picture; the participants, what the participants are saying, and the circumstances.

In a demand picture, Fig 5, is an example; the viewer of the image is placed in a position similar to the receiver of the information in a face-to-face conversation, eye-to-eye contact with sender of the information. At this level of contact, the viewer is expected to be emotionally involved with the sender of the information (Eisner 89). Moreover, speakers’ words are given salience in
the image. The panel in Fig 5, therefore, carries a far higher (visually) interactive and (textually) interpersonal content than the panel in Fig 6, an offer picture.

Figure 5

Figure 6
This is important because in order to present interpersonal information of the type where the speaker is supplying detailed information, a series of demand style panels are needed. In the illustrated abridged text then, to represent the original text’s opening statement, there would have had to be shown a series of demand ‘talking head’ (Eisner 128) style pictures of Holmes. This creates a problem in comic book narratives because as a visual medium, readers expect visual stimuli and demand pictures, although important to characterization, have only limited visual value and therefore cannot be overused (this has pedagogical significance, see Part 7).

Therefore, in order to move the narrative forward, comic books strongly feature offer style pictures. Moreover, offer pictures have a high representational content. The representational content of a picture, like the experiential function of the written text, defines the participants, process, and circumstances in the picture (Jewitt and Oyama 141-142). The visual elements of the illustrated abridged text carry a high representational potential, the main participants are introduced, involved in actions, (talking, sitting, debating, relaxing etc) in the clearly defined domestic circumstances of the Victorian period. These elements, of action and scenery, support the experiential function of the textbox (this too has pedagogical significance, Part 7). However, the cutting of the interpersonal content of the original opening dialogue to achieve the experiential/representational function, as shown in sections 4 and this section, has created significant differences in the characterization of Holmes and Watson. This is supported by an examination of the interpersonal content of the text.

5 THE INTERPERSONAL COMPARISON

An interpersonal examination of the text can show the reader the underlying relationships of power between the speakers and the speakers’ attitudes and judgments (Halliday and Matthiessen 106). The interpersonal analysis below will show that in the original text, Holmes’s role is far more powerful and domineering than in the illustrated abridged text. While in the illustrated abridged text, Watson’s position is far stronger and more direct than in the original text. This will be shown through the analysis of the power relationship between Holmes and Watson and the use of modality in the text.

5.1 Power Relationships

Power relationships between the speakers can be shown by analyzing which speaker dominates the conversation (Eggins 193). Due to the cutting of the original dialogue, to make it more interactive, the power relationships between Holmes and Watson automatically change. Thus, in the original text, (where Holmes is allocated four complex declarative clauses, while Watson is allocated one, Fig 4) Holmes holds the floor with little space granted to Watson’s character to form a response. Clearly Conan Doyle is portraying the character of Holmes as being the more powerful character.
In the illustrated abridged text, this is not the case. Holmes’s declarative clauses are reduced to two and one of them is made less complex (Fig 6). This changes the relationship between Holmes and Watson because it allows more room for Watson to create a response. Therefore, although he is not given equal parity, he is allocated a stronger role.

5.2 Modality

Modalization is concerned with the degrees of certainty speakers’ use when making statements (Thompson 63-75). In Watson’s response to Holmes in the original text, (Fig 7), the inclusion of ‘quite’ indicates that Watson is not fully committed to his statement that he is guilty of Holmes’ accusation (‘the charge’) of sensationalism. However, just as the inclusion of modality can make statements less assured, its exclusion can make statements more assured (Eggins 183). In Fig 8 taken from the illustrated abridged text, without the Mood Adjunct, there is clearly more commitment on Watson’s part that he is guilty of the accusation; it is a stronger, more assured response.

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<th>Figure 7 – The Original Text</th>
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<th>Figure 8 – The Illustrated Abridged Text</th>
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This strengthening of Watson’s position by the exclusion of modality is coupled with a weakening of Holmes’ role due to the loss of modality in the cut text. In the original text, Holmes’ statements make him appear an assured expert in the mind of the reader by omitting modilization when Holmes is talking about himself, Fig 9, 10. For example, a Comment Adjunct of ‘presumption’ (Halliday and Matthiessen 146) such as ‘arguably’ (Fig 9), or a Mood adjunct such as ‘sometimes’ (Fig 10) would render Holmes’ statements less assured.
6 THE TEXTUAL COMPARISON

The textual meta-function is a facilitating function that allows the text to be constructed in a way that enables the interpersonal and experiential functions to be interpreted by the reader (Halliday and Matthiessen 30). The textual analysis below will show how the two texts are constructed in a way that allows them to have a similar opening scene and yet achieve different experiential and interpersonal goals.

6.1 Identical Theme and Rheme

Both texts construct the opening clause using ‘predicted Theme’ (Fig 11), (Halliday and Matthiessen 95), which allows Holmes’s critical, evaluative nature to be fore-grounded. The predicted Theme allows for newsworthy information, which is normally placed in the Rheme position (Fries 230), to be presented in the Theme position. Consequently, that information appears less newsworthy and therefore more acceptable (Halliday and Matthiessen 96). Thus, the use of the empty ‘it’ allows Conan Doyle to foreground Holmes’s highly evaluative statement in the less newsworthy and more acceptable thematic position.

Moreover, the foregrounding effect that the predicted Theme produces is highly contrastive (Halliday and Matthiessen 95, Thompson 151). In this clause, the contrast is contained in ‘it is in the least important and lowliest manifestations’. This phrase implicitly suggests that there are other more important and higher manifestations of art, (i.e. it is in least important NOT higher ones) that ‘man’ could, in Holmes’s critical opinion, potentially find pleasure in. Holmes fulfills this implicit prediction later in the original text where he refers to the more important manifestations, ‘the causes celebres and sensational trials’. However, again due to the cutting of the original dialogue,
the illustrated abridged text loses this textual fulfillment. Indeed, the second clause of the dialogue continues this textual contraction which has a significant effect on the overall theme/rheme content. This will be explained next.

Figure 11

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<tr>
<th>Identical Theme/Rheme Clause 1 – Predicted Theme</th>
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Notational Conventions – Th=theme; Rh=rheme, [[…]]=downranked clause boundary

6.1.1 Different Textual Themes

In the 2nd clause of the dialogue, the original text expands Holmes’ evaluative stance while the illustrated abridged text contracts it. The original text expands Holmes’ evaluative statements using another Thematic fronting device, ‘postposed Theme’, Fig 12. Following Halliday and Matthiessen’s definition of Theme (93-97), ‘it’ alone would be the theme. Thus, the Thematic fronting of ‘it’ stands in for the embedded clause ‘that you have so far grasped this truth’. However, Thompson (153) extends the Theme to include ‘It is pleasant’ (Theme). Thompson’s model illustrates that the original text places a highly evaluative comment at the beginning of the clause. Holmes is making a condescending comment on Watson’s abilities; he is pleased with Watson because he has ‘grasped the truth’.

The illustrated abridged text, however, replaces the Thematic fronted ‘it’ with the unmarked Theme ‘You’ (Fig 13). This significantly reduces the reader’s information about Holmes’s attitude towards Watson but it, conversely, creates a more interactive dialogue by fronting the information that Holmes is directly addressing someone. Here, a shorter dialogue is created that introduces both characters efficiently, which fits into the texts overall orientating needs because it allows other key thematic elements to be placed in the opening scene, (see 6.2). However, as has been shown in this paper, cutting the dialogue changes its underlying communicative function.

Figure 12 – The Original Text

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<th>Different Theme/Rheme Clause 2 – Postposed Theme</th>
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Notational Conventions – Th=theme; Rh=rheme, [[…]]=downranked clause boundary
6.2 The Compositional Meaning of the RG Text

The compositional meta-function in visual analysis equates with the textual meta-function in written analysis (Jewitt and Oyama 147-151). Of key importance when analyzing the composition of a picture is the placement of elements. The placement of elements in a picture, e.g. at the center, at the margins, etc, gives those elements a certain value. This is most obviously illustrated by the center position. The element that is placed at the center of the picture is the key element that holds the picture together; the other elements that are placed at the margin of the center are dependent on the centre position (Stenglin and Iedama 196).

It is significant that the illustrated abridged text places the fireplace at the centre of the panel (Fig 2) not the dialogue between Holmes and Watson. Rather, the two key participants are placed on either side, with the cut dialogue placed inside small ‘speech bubbles’ (speech bubbles -the borders that encircle the spoken word- have a high visual content in comic books, Eisner 26) This enables the dialogue between Holmes and Watson to be viewed as part of a wider scene. This wider scene has both a high visual content, the interior scenery of the famous location, and a written text content, the textbox placed at the top of the picture. However, while the shortening of the dialogue has visually expanding effect because it allows other orientating elements to be introduced, it seriously, as has been shown in the analysis, contracts the linguistic effects of the original dialogue.

7 PEDAGOGOCAL CONSIDERATIONS

This SFG analysis has shown that abridging the original text for a classroom or modern comic book audience has created a significantly different text that carries a far higher experiential/ representational content. Conversely, the illustrated abridged text also carries a lower interpersonal content than the original text and this has significantly changed the characteristics of the main characters. These findings are significant for the teaching of reading comprehension in language classrooms in the following areas.

First, if these findings can be generalized in an educational context -that abridged illustrative texts and comic books, because they are visual text, on the whole carry higher experiential content but less interpersonal content than constitutive texts- it would give a valuable insight into the strengths and weakness of using predominately visual texts in the classroom, both in extensive

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Figure 13 – The Illustrated Abridged Text

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<th>Different Theme/Rheme Clause 2 – Unmarked Theme</th>
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Notational Conventions – Th=theme; Rh=rheme,
reading programs and multi-modal classrooms. For example, applying the findings of this study, the illustrated abridged text would be very effective for efficiently creating the external world of Holmes and Watson in the minds of language learners but students would lose much of the original characterization that Conan Doyle intended, which is one of the great joys of reading original texts. Thus, accurate SFG data may be able to help to evaluate the effects abridging has on the underlying meanings in texts.

Moreover, although, as Eisner suggests (141) traditionally it is challenging for illustrated texts to produce in depth interpersonal dialogues (which this limited study supports) depth of character is achieved in visual texts; for example Spiegelman’s ‘Maus: A Survivors Tale’ series which won the Pulitzer Prize for Literature (Gorman 3). More SFG analysis of the relationship between written text and visual text could help to explain how in depth characterization is achievable, which could, in turn, create more classroom direction into which texts will help different reading needs.

Finally, in the case of visuals support reading comprehension of written texts, Liu, (225-243), suggests that although pictures do support reading for low level students reading low level texts, they do not appear to support high level students reading high level texts. Comparative text studies, of the kind taken in this paper, tested in the classroom, may be able to help to explain these findings. For example, demand style pictures, of the kind shown in Fig 5 may not help comprehension of the written text because the interactive image does not illustrate the interpersonal text. However, an offer style picture, (Fig 6) may help written text comprehension because the representational image supports the experiential content of the text. By extension then, to make a complex interpersonal text comprehensible, it may have to be supported by representational images that support the text, for example to illustrate the metaphor of Watson ‘grasping’ an idea (Fig 4) would take a representational image of the material process to grasp. More research in this area could create a taxonomy of which combination of meanings, (e.g. interpersonal with interactive or interpersonal with representational) can best aid reading in different teaching contexts. This could support future curriculum and textbook development.

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