

## The Role of Semiotic Metaphor in the Verbal-Visual Interplay of Three Children's Picture Books. A Multisemiotic Systemic-Functional Approach

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This paper aims to explore how the use of semiotic metaphors in picture books contributes to children's understanding of the stories. The three picture books selected for analysis were written during the twentieth century and respond to a standard of literary quality: *Guess How Much I Love You* (1994), *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) and *Gorilla* (1983). The concept of semiotic metaphor as a tool to create ideational meaning is analysed within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis. Kay O'Halloran extends the Hallidayan concept of grammatical metaphor to the semiotic metaphor in order to determine how verbal and visual modes interact with each other in multimodal texts. Like grammatical metaphor, semiotic metaphor also involves a shift in the grammatical class or function of an element. As this process does not take place intra-semiotically, but rather inter-semiotically, the reconstrual produces a semantic change in the function of that element, creating a new way of making meaning and representing reality. The results of the analysis show that semiotic metaphors are essentially used in children's tales to facilitate young children's understanding of the story by making some abstract phenomena related to states of being more concrete and specific.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Linguistics; grammatical metaphor; semiotic metaphor; verbal-visual intersemiosis; picture books

### La función de la metáfora semiótica en la interrelación texto-imagen de tres libros álbum infantiles. Un enfoque sistémico-funcional y multisemiótico

El objetivo de este artículo es explorar como la utilización de metáforas semióticas contribuye a la comprensión de tres cuentos álbum infantiles. Los tres cuentos seleccionados para su

análisis son: *Adivina cuanto te quiero* (1994), *Donde viven los monstruos* (1963) y *Gorila* (1983). El concepto de metáfora semiótica como una herramienta para crear significado ideacional es analizado desde enfoques como la Lingüística sistémico-funcional de Halliday y del Análisis discursivo-multimodal. Kay O'Halloran amplía el concepto de metáfora gramatical y lo aplica al modo visual, creando así la metáfora semiótica, con el objetivo de explorar cómo la palabra y la imagen se complementan en textos multimodales. Al igual que la metáfora gramatical, la metáfora semiótica implica también un cambio en la clase gramatical o función de un constituyente. Como este cambio no tiene lugar intrasemióticamente sino intersemióticamente, la reconstrucción da lugar a una variación semántica que genera nuevas formas de crear significado y representar la realidad. Los resultados del análisis demuestran que la utilización de metáforas semióticas facilita la comprensión del mensaje al joven lector de cuentos álbum, dado que a través de ellas se representan fenómenos y estados de carácter abstracto de una forma más concreta y tangible.

Palabras clave: Lingüística sistémico-funcional; metáfora gramatical; metáfora semiótica; interacción texto-imagen; álbum ilustrado

## I. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Throughout the last decades there has been considerable research on the role and function of visual materials in multimodal texts such as advertisements, picture books, comics, scientific texts and textbooks (Kress and van Leeuwen [1966] 2006; Forceville 1996; Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009; O'Halloran 2004, 2008; Unsworth and Cléirigh 2009; Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013, and Cohn 2013, among others).<sup>1</sup> However, much work still needs to be done to clarify how images and words are combined together as joint contributors to creating meaning in genres where language occurs with other semiotic modes. Since Barthes' three-way classification of text and image relations into (i) relay—text and image contribute equally to the creation of meaning, each making their own contribution—(ii) anchorage—text fixes the meaning of the image making its interpretation clear—and (iii) illustration—the image supports the text and adds details to a message which is essentially expressed through verbal language—(1977, 28-41), other researchers have proposed further taxonomies to characterise the synergy between verbal and non-verbal modes in different genres. In fact, from the late 1990s and early 2000s text and image relationships have been approached from various different perspectives; some of them closely connected with already well-articulated grammatical and discourse frameworks.

Two areas of grammatical description within Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (2004), that of clause transitivity—events are organised into processes, participants and circumstances—and that of clause combining relations of expansion and projection, have been greatly influential on the study of text-image interplay in multisemiotic texts (Bateman 2014, 186-187). The former, essentially developed within multimodal studies by Kress and van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006), attempts to show the correspondences between the verbal and the visual participants, processes and their associated circumstances present in the verbal and non-verbal semiotic modes of a multimodal text (such as Halliday 2004, 168-178). The latter concept, dealing with logico-semantic relations and mainly developed in multimodal studies by Martinec and Salway (2005), van Leeuwen (2005) and Unsworth (2007), establishes the way text and images add information to each other by means of relations of expansion and projection (Halliday 2004, 395-445).<sup>2</sup> As Bateman (2014, 117-238) points out, multimodality

<sup>1</sup> I greatly thank Kay O'Halloran for her insightful comments on some of the examples analysed in this paper. I am solely responsible for any errors that may still remain.

<sup>2</sup> Expansion contemplates three different ways in which words or images can add information to each other: elaboration, enhancement and extension. Through elaboration and enhancement either words or images provide extra details to the information presented in the other semiotic mode. Images, for example, may provide information about spatial configurations, clothing and appearance of the represented participants, etc. (elaboration) or they may specify where, when or how a specific action occurs adding circumstantial information (enhancement). Through extension, text and images contribute more or less equally to advancing the story and move on towards "new episodes, alternatives, commentaries and so on" (Bateman 2014, 88-89). Finally, projection holds a verbal-visual relationship between a process of saying or thinking and what is said or thought. This kind of relationship, if present, is typically expressed in multimodal texts in speech balloons and thought bubbles.

has also been addressed through the lenses of discourse-based approaches (Kong 2006; Martin 1992; Martin and Rose 2003; van Leeuwen 1991, 2005; Liu and O'Halloran 2009), pragmatic frameworks (Stöckl 2004), rhetorical approaches to advertising and visual persuasion (Mann and Thompson 1998; McQuarrie and Mick 1999; Phillips and McQuarrie 2004; Toboada and Habel 2013), and cognitive theory, specifically pictorial and multimodal metaphors (Forceville 1996; Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009; Caballero 2009; Hidalgo-Downing and Kraljevic Mujic 2011; Pinar 2013, 2015).

The approaches referred to here have been used to reveal how images and words are combined together to create meaning in multimodal artefacts consisting of verbal and non-verbal modes. The genres analysed range from static images to moving images, from advertisements to textbooks, to films and beyond. This paper is a contribution to the study of the relationship between images and words in the genre of picture books.<sup>3</sup> In particular, I aim to explore how semiotic metaphors contribute to text-image relations in a sample of three picture books written during the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> All three are well-known and respond to a standard of literary quality (Townsend 1990; Gamble and Yeats 2002, 101-162; Hunt 2004, 223-622). In the stories selected, text and illustrations both play a fundamental function in the construction of the plot and are arranged in compositional and juxtaposed layouts, which is usually the case in tales consisting of image-text combinations (Cerrillo and Yubero 2007; Moya-Guijarro and Ávila 2009; Moya-Guijarro 2014, 7-17). The books selected for analysis are *Where the Wild Things Are*, written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak ([1963] 2007), *Gorilla*, written and illustrated by Anthony Browne ([1983] 2002), and *Guess How Much I Love You*, written by Sam McBratney and illustrated by Anita Jeram (1994). The first two stories are contemporary classics, that is, works that can be considered models to imitate due to their notable literary quality. They are known to have persevered as a success among children, generations after they were created or written. In addition, I have also chosen a more contemporary tale, *Guess How Much I Love You* (1994), a book that continues to be popular among children and adults, over twenty years after its first publication.

<sup>3</sup> The image-text combination in picture books has also been addressed from different frameworks. Agosto (1999), Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) and Moya-Guijarro (2014) have proposed several categories to show how images and word complement each other in this genre. The relationships range from symmetry (images and words tell the same message) through complementarity (images and words fill each other's gaps) to contradiction (words and images conflict with each other) and counterpointing (words and images generate meanings which are beyond the scope of each modality in isolation).

<sup>4</sup> The notion of semiotic metaphor adopted here is different from the tropes of verbal, pictorial and multimodal metaphors developed within Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff 1987, 1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Forceville 1996; Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009). Verbal and pictorial metaphors are characterised by their potential to transfer meaning from a source to a target domain and are conceived as modes of thought (Lakoff 1993, 210). Metaphors, therefore, are not primarily linguistic phenomena, but rather are modes of conceptual representation (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009, 19-44). From a different though complementary perspective, O'Halloran (1999, 2003) has developed the concept of semiotic metaphor to account for the parallel or divergent relationships that can be established across verbal and visual modalities in multimodal texts.

The approach adopted to carry out this study is Kay O'Halloran's multimodal discourse analysis (2004, 2005, 2007, 2008) and, essentially, her notion of semiotic metaphor (O'Halloran 1999; 2003). The concept of semiotic metaphor as a tool to create ideational meaning is studied within the framework of Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA), which attempts to describe how semiotic resources are integrated and combined in multimodal discourses. Using an SF-MDA, O'Halloran analysed visual semiosis in films and the intersemiosis of images and mathematical symbolism in mathematical texts and mathematical classroom discourse (2000, 2004, 2005). O'Halloran was interested in the multimodal phenomenon itself, that is, in the system networks which map the semiotic resources available to generate representational, interactive and compositional meanings (Jewitt 2009, 33).

This focus on the system, and on meaning being the result of choices made from the system, essentially comes from Halliday's social semiotic theory and systemic-functional linguistics (1978, 2004). Indeed, O'Halloran's notion of semiotic metaphor (1999, 2003) is, in fact, an extension of Halliday's grammatical metaphor to expand it in order to determine how images and words integrate across semiotic modes. She starts from the assumption that it is possible to have parallel or congruent representations of visual and verbal information across different semiotic modes, mutually supporting and complementing each other. However, there are also cases, metaphorical in nature, where there is a semantic reconstrual through which additional substantive information that is not present in one of the modes (be it verbal or visual) is provided by the other. This reconstrual often involves a semantic change in the status and function of a verbal or visual element, and creates new meanings that could not have been predictable from one of the modalities alone.

This paper is structured in the following way. After the introduction, in section two the main features of semiotic metaphor are briefly outlined. In section three, I explore the discourse functions of semiotic metaphors in the three picture books selected for analysis. Finally, in the conclusions, the data extracted from the empirical study are interpreted in qualitative and functional terms. This last part makes evident how semiotic metaphors are useful strategies to convey representational meaning through verbal and non-verbal modes in picture books.

## 2. FROM GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR TO SEMIOTIC METAPHOR

Before starting with the analysis, in this section I will refer to the main features of O'Halloran's concept of semiotic metaphor (1999, 2003), whose foundations, as noted in section one, reside on Halliday's concept of grammatical metaphor ([1985] 1994, 2004). In spite of being a daily reality habitually present in human communication, text, be it verbal or visual, can be manifested as a highly complex linguistic reality. One of the elements that should be studied in order to deal with a text is what Halliday defines as "the principle of grammatical metaphor" ([1985] 1994, 321). In line with

Halliday, Ravelli (1988, 321) defines grammatical metaphor in terms of the transfer of representational material involved in a metaphorical construal and states that: “The situation is similar to that found in (rhetorical) metaphor: there is some kind of transference going on. But it is no longer transfer or referent from the literal to the figurative, between the same grammatical categories, but transfer of representation between different grammatical categories” (Ravelli 1988, 134).

In Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar, clause transitivity involves the configuration of processes, the participants acting within them, and their associated circumstances. In the language of children and in everyday spoken language typical realisations are frequently used to convey meaning. In them, each word functions “as far as possible in the class in which it first evolved” (Halliday and Webster 2014, 149). This means that in semantic structures, events, participants, qualities of objects, circumstances and logical connections are realised by their typical grammatical functions so that there is a one-to-one correspondence between semantics and the grammatical descriptions of the clause. Prototypically, processes are realised by verbs (‘act’), entities by nouns (‘cast’ as in *the cast of the play*), attributes by adjectives (‘brilliant’), circumstances by adverbials (‘brilliantly’) and prepositional groups (‘for a long time’) and, finally, logical connections by conjunctions (‘because’). A prototypical realisation is found, for instance, in the following clauses, taken from Halliday and Matthiessen ([1999] 2006, 229):

- (1) The cast [ACTOR] acted [PROCESS] brilliantly [CIRCUMSTANCE] so [RELATOR] the audience [ACTOR] applauded [PROCESS] for a long time [CIRCUMSTANCE].

Any state of affairs can, though, be expressed in more complex ways, for example:

- (2) The cast’s brilliant acting [ACTOR] drew [PROCESS] lengthy applause [GOAL] from the audience [CIRCUMSTANCE].

Halliday acknowledges that by the use of grammatical metaphor, experiential content can be repackaged in a different way (2004, 592-593, 626-636). The prototypical realisation is the congruent form, while the others are metaphorical and they occur when the grammatical and semantic realisations of the clause are divergent. Grammatical metaphor is a process by which an inter-stratal tension occurs between discourse semantics and lexico-grammar (Halliday 1998; Martin 2008; Taverniers 2014). Actions and states, as shown in the previous example (‘acted’), can be metaphorically encoded as nouns (‘acting’), which involves a restructuring of the clause. Processes, attributes and circumstances can also be conceptualised as entities in metaphorical mappings. Even the whole state of affairs, which in the congruent form would be realised by a clause, can be expressed by a nominal group and encoded as an entity in its corresponding manifestations. In turn, a clause complex may be construed

as a single clause, frequently a relational clause of the intensive or circumstantial type. The following utterance, analysed in Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks and Yallop (2003, 74), provides an example:

- (3) Excessive consumption of alcohol is a major cause of motor vehicle accidents.

In this instance, none of the events of the possible congruent expression found in example 4 below ('drink,' 'drive' and 'cause') are repackaged as processes. Instead, in example 3 the material processes of drinking and causing are packaged as participants ('consumption' and 'cause') and a relational process is used as a linking point between them ('is'). In addition, the information presented in the congruent form through three different processes ('drink,' 'drive' and 'cause') is condensed in a sole clause complex with a higher level of abstraction:

- (4) People who drink too much alcohol and drive often cause motor vehicle accidents.

Likewise, Coffin, Donohue and North (2009, 423) offer another clear case of grammatical metaphor, reproduced in example 5, where a nominal group containing a nominalisation, 'the reason for my early return' is used to condense information that would otherwise be expressed through two processes ('come' and 'die') in two different clauses in the congruent realisation (example 6): 'I came back early' and 'because my father died.' The metaphorical form leads to a different, denser organization of the message and allows the writer to establish a causal ('reason') and intensive ('was') relationship between two elements:

- (5) The reason for my early return was the death of my father.

- (6) I came back early because my father died.

Thus, metaphorical expressions involve a more indirect relation between grammar and meaning and, as such, are more complex at a semantic level than congruent expressions. These alternative realisations of the semantic functions may lead to further adjustments or transfers in the relationship between the semantic roles and syntactic functions in the clause (Downing and Locke 2006, 160-166; Downing 2014, 190-196).

This phenomenon of grammatical metaphor is typically associated with nominalisation, which implies a conversion of what is a clausal process into the syntactic form of a noun, which can then serve as a potential participant in another process. This process usually carries with it an evident decrease in valences of the verb by silencing, generally, some or all of the participants and circumstances of the old verb process. Nominalisation arises as a metaphorical resource that, unlike any other,

allows for a reduction of the amount of information in a verbal predicate. In addition, in functional terms, the repackaging of a clause into a nominal group has a discursive textual function and expands the meaning potential of the language. In the case of scientific discourse, this involves both technicalising and rationalising a given reasoned argument (O'Halloran 2003, 339-340), making it easier, as Halliday and Webster point out, "to build up a structured argument and in so doing to work towards a coherent and powerful theory" (2014, 151).

O'Halloran (1999, 2003, 2008) expands the Hallidayan concept of grammatical metaphor to semiotic metaphor in order to determine how images and words integrate across verbal and visual semiotic modes. These semiotic metaphorical constructions enable writers and visual artists both (i) to create semantic reconstructions and (ii) to account for the expansions of meaning which occur between visual and verbal semiotic resources in science. Semiotic metaphor involves an inter-semiotic stage where a functional element is reconstructed in a different semiotic code. The semantic reconstruction occurs across different semiotic codes and generates a shift in the functional status of an element, which frequently leads to a duplication of meaning (Lemke 1998, 92). As O'Halloran (1999, 348) points out:

The new functional status of the element does not equate with its former status in the original semiotic or, alternatively, a new functional element is introduced in the new semiotic, which previously did not exist. Thus, like grammatical metaphor, semiotic metaphor also involves a shift in the grammatical class or function of an element. However, the change does not take place intrasemiotically (as in the case of grammatical metaphor), but rather intersemiotically. The re-construction produces a semantic change in the function of that element, creating a new way of representing reality.

As will be seen in the analysis carried out in section 3, these shifts may involve the reconstruction of processes in language as participants in the visual representation or the introduction of new visual participants. It may also involve a shift from clause, process, attributes or circumstance in the textual mode to entities in the visual component.

In accordance with O'Halloran (2003), Kress also assumes that semiotic changes always entail shifts in meaning, essentially when the re-articulation of meaning occurs across different modes (2010, 129). In fact, he adopts the term "transduction" (129) which corresponds to O'Halloran's concept of semiotic metaphor, to signal the moving of meaning-material from one semiotic mode to another, for example, from speech to writing or from writing to film. Like O'Halloran, Kress (2010) assumes that the meaning realised in one mode can be articulated in a different way in another mode and, therefore, the shift may involve a change of meaning. Along with "transduction," Kress also uses the term "transformation" to refer to meaning reconstructions that take place within the same semiotic mode (2010, 129). This may happen, for instance, when we translate a novel from one language into another. Kress (2010, 124) explains



the changes in representation within and across modes, genres and cultures in this way: “To restate: there are two kinds of moving meaning and/or altering meaning: one by moving across modes and changing entities (and usually logics—transduction; the other, staying within a mode) and staying therefore with the same logic, but reordering the entities in a syntagm transformation.”

While transformation is not associated with any semantic change, since entities and the processes they operate remain within the same semantic categories, transduction, in contrast, do involve a change in entities and their associated processes.

### 3. IDENTIFYING AND COMMENTING ON SEMIOTIC METAPHORS

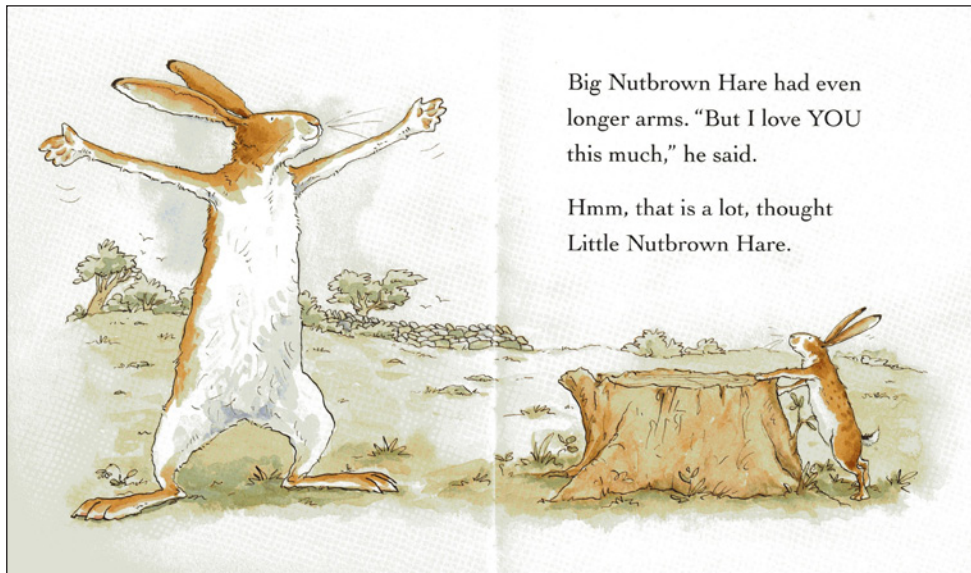
Now the main features of semiotic metaphor have been explained, in this section I shall study the verbal and non-verbal modes of expression used in picture books, taking into account a specific approach to multisemiotics, according to which, semiotic principles operate in and across different modes. These may reinforce each other (i.e., say the same thing in different ways) or, due to their different affordances and constraints, fulfil complementary roles (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, 38-52; 2006, 79-82; Moya-Guijarro 2014, 38-52). Firstly, I analyse the manifestations of semiotic metaphor to represent narrative reality in the sample texts. Once the metaphors utilised are identified, I discuss the communicative functions they fulfil in their specific stories and the effect they have on conveying representational meaning. Due to space restrictions, only three figures are reproduced here.

#### 3.1. Guess How Much I Love You

The first picture book that is analysed is *Guess How Much I Love You* (McBratney and Jeram 1994). Its plot is simple. The tale is based on the continuous competition between father and son to show how great their love for each other is. Their reciprocal love is measured through spatial distances, determined either according to the different parts of the protagonists' bodies—“I love you as high as I can reach' says Little Nutbrown Hare, lifting his arms as much as he can”—or through physical actions—“I love you as high as I can HOP!', laughed Little Nutbrown Hare, bouncing up and down”—or based on the landscape that accompanies the illustrations—“I love you across the river and over the hill,' said Big Nutbrown Hare.” Through verbal and visual strategies, the writer and the illustrator show the young readers the difficulty that comes with quantifying father-son love. In the final phase, when Little Nutbrown Hare seems to have won the competition by revealing that he loves his father as much as the distance that exists between them and the moon, Big Nutbrown Hare discloses that the love he feels for his son is even greater, since it is comparable to the distance that exists between them and the moon, and back: “Then he lay down close by and whispered with a smile, ‘I love you right up to the moon—AND BACK.’”

We find the first semiotic metaphor identified in this story in the fourth double spread. The verbal component reads: “I love you this much,” said Little Nutbrown Hare.” The meaning of the circumstance ‘this much’ in the verbal mode is exemplified through the material process of stretching out the arms in the visual component. Therefore, there is a shift from circumstance (linguistic) to process (visual). In this way, the reader will interpret the visual representation as dynamic (as process) and not stative (a state). This shift increases the complementary nature that is established between words and images in the tale as the reader can assess the true meaning of ‘this much’ when he or she looks at the illustration (Moya-Guijarro and Pinar 2009, 116). Little Nutbrown Hare loves his father as much as his outstretched arms can measure, a measurement that is easily surpassed by Big Nutbrown Hare in the following illustration, as the extension of his arms is notably bigger than his son’s.

Figure 1. I love you this much (McBratney and Jeram 1994).  
© Sam McBratney (text) and Anita Jeram (illustrations)



This feature is recurrent throughout the whole story: a total of twelve semiotic metaphors in the thirteen double spreads and two single pages that form the visual component of the illustrated book have been identified. The circumstances, some of them with post-modifying clauses and phrases—“I love you as high as I can reach,” “I love you all the way up to my toes,” “I love you as high as I can hop,” “I love you all the way down the lane as far as the river”; “I love you across the river and over the hills,” “I love you right up to the moon and back”—are represented visually as both material and mental processes. In the fifth double spread, for example, the

meaning of “I love you [as high as I can reach],” can only be fully understood through the visual component. Here again there is a shift from circumstance (linguistic) to process (visual) as the young hare is lifting up his arms as far as they can reach. The linguistic element, as high as I can reach, realised as a rank-shifted clause, becomes the major narrative process in the image with the participant hare (O'Halloran, personal communication).<sup>5</sup>

In the seventh illustration of *Guess How Much I Love You* another semiotic metaphor can be identified as the circumstance with post-modifying phrase, ‘up to my toes,’ in “I love you all the way up to my toes” becomes a process in the visual mode. Here Little Nutbrown Hare is tumbling upside down and is reaching up the trunk of a big tree with his feet. In the previous images, the exemplification of how much one hare loves the other has been depicted through the position of arms (see Figure 1). The hare exemplifying was placed on the left, and the one observing, on the right. However, now at this point a change of orientation is produced as the hind legs are used to represent the textual aspects. In addition, the hare exemplifying is placed on the right hand side of the double spread upside down. This way, the reading of the picture book does not become monotonous, recurrent and predictable.

It seems evident that through the use of semiotic metaphors images and words complement each other so that the reader's attention and the narrative tension are kept alive. By using these complementary relations, images and words contribute differently to the story line, as either the images enhance the meaning of the words, or they expand upon the meaning transmitted by the visual component. Thus, semiotic metaphors seem to increase the complementary nature of the interaction between the verbal and non-verbal semiotic modes in this picture book.

### 3.2. Where the Wild Things Are

The second picture book selected for analysis is *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak [1963] 2007). The tale tells the story of Max, a rebellious and intelligent child who misbehaves at home wearing his wolf costume. He chases his dog with a fork and threatens to eat up his mum after she calls him a “Wild Thing.” As a punishment she sends him to bed without supper. The magic starts soon after in his room, where there is a mixture of reality and fantasy. In his mind, Max's room transforms into a forest, and a sea starts to form. On his private boat Max sails away to the land of the wild things, also a product of his imagination. Once there, notwithstanding the monsters' fierceness and threatening acts, Max manages to tame them by staring into their yellow

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<sup>5</sup> Representational meaning involves the key processes: narrative and conceptual, which are differentiated by the presence of vectors, defined as diagonals which create movement. While narrative processes are characterised by vectors of motion which allow viewers to create a story about the Represented Participants (RPs), conceptual images do not include vectors, rather they represent participants in their more “generalised and timeless essence” (Kress and van Leeuwen [1996] 2006, 79).

eyes without blinking. Then, he is made king of the wild things and dances the “wild rumpus” with the monsters. However, a moment arrives when Max feels homesick and, as a result, he decides to go back to the safety and warmth of home.

As in *Guess How Much I Love You*, in this picture book semiotic metaphors, although fewer (four tokens have been identified in the eighteen double spreads that create the story), are essential to understanding how verbal and non-verbal modes complement each other to convey representational meaning. In this case, the semiotic metaphors are constructed to assign qualities to the main characters in the story, Max and the Wild Things. The wild things, for instance, are said to behave in a wild way (“roaring,” “gnashing,” etc.), a fact that is constantly repeated throughout the tale. The wild things are, though, also described as scared in the tenth double spread—“and they were frightened and called him the wildest thing of all”—a state that is also shown in the faces of the monsters when they look at Max revealing fear. Finally, Max is described as wild in double spread three—“his mother called him WILD THING”—and as lonely in double spread fifteen—“And Max the king of all wild things was lonely”—both states that are also faithfully depicted in the illustrations. Max behaves like a wild thing while he dances the “wild rumpus” (from double spreads twelve to fourteen) and his face shows a certain sadness when he starts to feel homesick and miss his mother’s love in the fifteenth double spread.

On some occasions these qualities are represented in the visual mode through semiotic metaphors. This feature intensifies the complementary character of the inter-animation between pictures and words in this tale, as there is a semantic shift from the linguistic (attribute) to the visual (process) and vice versa. In the tenth double spread, for example, the attribute ‘frightened’ in “they were frightened,” assigned to the wild things, is faithfully echoed through material and mental processes in the illustration: the wild things, scared, are throwing their hands on their heads as a sign of fear. In addition, they look at Max in astonishment, their big yellow eyes seeming to pop out of their heads being especially noticeable. The monsters that are closer to the protagonist appear to be sitting on the floor and watching him attentively. Similarly, the quality that recurrently modifies Max, *wild thing*, is represented in the visual mode in double spread twelve (reproduced here as Figure 2) by the material process of dancing the “wild rumpus.” Max mixes with the monsters and behaves like them, all of them expressing themselves according to their desires and giving free reign to their wild instincts. In the case of both Max and the monsters here, the attribute (‘wild’), which is linguistic, is represented in the visual mode by action and behavioural processes, producing a semantic shift in the status and function of the attributive constituent.

The figure reproduced here forms part of a series of three wordless illustrations (double spreads twelve to fourteen) in which Max and the monsters dance the wild rumpus, a dance which represents Max’s desire to follow his instincts and basic impulses. In them, Sendak uses coloured pen and ink pictures in muted colours. No words are required here to transmit the message to the young child. Max behaves like a wild thing and his tantrum is shown at its highest point, through the process of dancing in the visual mode.

Figure 2. Max and the Wild Things dancing the Wild Rumpus (Sendak [1963] 2007).  
© Maurice Sendak (text and illustrations)



### 3.3. Gorilla

*Gorilla* by Anthony Browne ([1983] 2002) is the third picture book analysed here. In this case, the story is constructed on the basis of the relationship established between Hannah, the protagonist of the story, her real father, and a gorilla, who acts as a stand-in father. Hannah is a lonely girl who is keen to see a real gorilla. However, her father does not have enough time to take her to the zoo. Nevertheless, the night before her birthday, something amazing happens. During the night, the toy gorilla she has received as an early gift comes to life and takes Hannah to the zoo to see the primates. In the morning her real father also organises a trip to the zoo for her, adding a happy ending to the story.

Like in *Where the Wild Things Are*, semiotic metaphors (five have been identified in eighteen double spreads and a single page) are also used to assign qualities to the main characters in the story. Once again, there is a semantic shift from the linguistic to the visual and vice versa to reflect important aspects of the story, specifically those related to Hannah's, her father's and the gorilla's states. In the last illustration, for example, Hannah is described as happy, an attribute (linguistic) that is also represented visually by the more concrete and tangible material process of walking toward the zoo. Remember that Hannah's true desire is to see a gorilla, a wish which is fulfilled in her real life only when her father takes her to the zoo on her birthday. As the quality of being happy, which is linguistic, is re-constructed through the material process of walking to the zoo here, there is an inter-semiotic transfer of ideational material from the verbal to the visual mode. The attribute, happy, which is typically realised by an

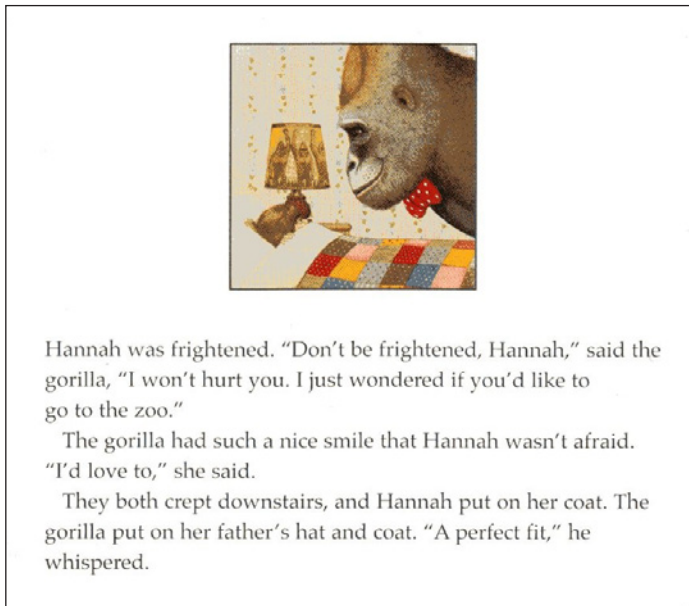
adjective in verbal language is now represented as a visual process. Similarly, on the left-hand side of double spread six, reproduced here as Figure 3, the attribute ‘frightened’ in “Hannah was frightened,” is echoed through action processes in the illustration on the verso. Hannah, scared, is shown lying in bed, with a blanket pulled up to her eyes to protect herself from Gorilla—now an alive toy. Material and behavioural processes are visualised here (Gorilla stands over Hannah, he looks at her, Hannah hides) and thus are immediately accessible since they are concrete in nature. In the book, the shift to assigning resultant (interpretative) states of being to Hannah (Hannah was frightened, Hannah has never been so happy) is achieved both linguistically and visually, but through different semantic categories. There is, therefore, an inter-semiotic shift from attributes (linguistic), which in this case are affective in nature, to material/behavioural processes to interpret the state of being of the participants. Hannah’s states of happiness and fear, described verbally by adjectives with an attributive function, are reflected in the visual modality in a metaphorical way through the use of narrative images containing action processes (Kress and van Leeuwen [1996] 2006, 43-78). Ideologically, the function of these semiotic metaphors is to guide children’s emotional responses to the world around them (O’Halloran, personal communication). For children it is easier to understand material processes, which are concrete in nature, than mental processes of affection, due to the abstraction typically involved in the latter.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the quality of always being busy, assigned to Hannah’ father, is also represented in the illustrations through material processes, establishing once again a shift from the linguistic (attribute) to the visual (process). The state of being busy is reflected in the second double spread through the material process of reading and studying some papers. Hannah’s father is at his desk working with some papers by the light of a lamp, and without looking at his daughter he verbalises his state (“I am busy”) right at the moment when she tries to establish interaction with him: “When Hannah would ask him a question, he would say, ‘Not now. I’m busy. Maybe tomorrow’” (second double spread).

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<sup>6</sup> While material processes reflect the processes of the external world, mental processes refer to the processes of consciousness. Material processes are typically processes of doing, happening, causing and transferring. However, mental processes are processes of perception (experiencing or sensing), of cognition, of desideration and of emotion and affection. The typical participants associated with material processes are *actor* (usually a human entity acting intentionally) and *goal* (a participant affected by the action). For their part, the typical participants in a mental process clause are *sensor* and *phenomenon*. Added to material and mental processes are those of classifying and identifying, known as relational, which are processes of having, being or becoming, in which a participant is identified or situated circumstantially (Halliday 2004, 248-258). They express intensive (being), circumstantial or possessive relations, and are typically associated with the participants Carrier/Identified and Attribute/Identifier. Finally, although not clearly separate, Halliday (2004, 210-238) distinguishes further categories of processes, which are located at the three boundaries: behavioural, verbal and existential processes. For further information about the typology of processes differentiated in Systemic Functional Grammar, see Halliday (2004, chapter 5).

Figure 3. Hannah is frightened (left-hand side of double spread) (Browne [1983] 2002)  
 © Anthony Browne (text and illustration)



#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In this study I have analysed how semiotic metaphors contribute to the creation of representational meaning in picture books. The results of the analysis show that semiotic metaphors are essentially used in children's tales to facilitate the understanding of the story by young children. Through semiotic metaphors, illustrators assign qualities to the main characters in children's books, giving a concrete nature and tangibility to states of being that might be abstract for the young reader. We have seen how in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak [1963] 2007), for example, the protagonist, Max, is described continuously in the *verbiage* with the attribute 'wild' due to his bad behaviour at home. The illustrator reflects this state in the visual component through the material process of "dancing the wild rumpus," establishing a shift from attribute (linguistic) in verbal language to action process in images. In a similar way, the state of being frightened (by Max), associated with the monsters in this picture book is represented in the visual mode through the material process of the monsters throwing their hands to their heads as a sign of their fear and respect towards Max, described as the wildest thing of all. The picture book *Gorilla* (Browne [1983] 2002) is also evidence of the utilisation of semiotic metaphors to assign qualities to the main character in the story. Some of the relational processes and their attributes in the verbal language that describes Hannah's states of being (happy, scared) are echoed in the illustration through the use of semiotic metaphors.

Hannah is described in the verbal component as happy when her real father actually takes her to the zoo to see the orangutan and the chimpanzee. This state of happiness, described by the attribute 'happy' (linguistic), is reflected in the illustration through the material process of walking towards the zoo. In addition, Hannah's fear and state of being scared when she realises that the toy gorilla has become real (attribute) are represented in the visual mode through the material process of pulling the blanket up to her eyes.

Another clear example of the use of semiotic metaphors to add specificity to some aspects of the narrative plot and so facilitate the understanding of the message to the young child in picture books is *Guess How Much I Love you* (McBratney and Jeram 1994). Throughout the story, in the textual component, circumstantial elements, such as "this much," "as high as I can reach," "up to my toes," "as high as I can hop," "as far as the river," etc., which quantify the extension of the love Big Nutbrown Hare and Little Nutbrown Hare have for each other, are realised as action and reaction processes in the visual mode (Kress and van Leeuwen [1996] 2006, 43-78). The circumstantial elements referred to are represented in the illustrations by means of material and mental processes of perception. Consequently, young readers see the congruent process (visual) recoded as circumstance (linguistic). Throughout this change the illustrator provides the information that was missing in the verbal mode and, in turn, gives dynamism to the plot. In books, children are more interested in actions than in states or descriptions, which are more static in nature and slow down the development of the plot. In addition, the shift of qualities or states (linguistic) to material and mental processes (visual) makes it easier for children to follow the message transmitted in the tale. Abstract states such as being frightened, being wild or being happy are more difficult to understand than action processes, which are concrete in nature.

The concept of semiotic metaphor has in this study proven to be a useful tool to analyse not only the linkages between verbal and non-verbal elements in scientific discourse as O'Halloran has demonstrated (2003), but also for the study of text-image combinations in picture books. Picture books are composite wholes, essentially made of words and images, and a true understanding of their meaning can only be achieved if both illustrations and language are read in combination and as equally essential parts of the multimodal ensemble. The use of semiotic metaphorical constructions intensifies the complementary character of the inter-animation between pictures and words as there is a semantic shift from the linguistic to the visual mode and vice versa. The young age of the children for whom the tales are written and illustrated seems to determine the verbal and visual intersemiosis of complementarity that the utilisation of semiotic metaphors generates in these picture books. Semiotic metaphor seems to be a useful strategy to create tales that are both easy for young children to understand and, in turn, interesting enough to hold their attention. Writers and illustrators need to know how semiotic metaphors may be exploited to represent the narrative reality through verbal and non-verbal elements in order to facilitate an understanding of the message to their young readers and viewers.



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