

A BI-MODAL AND SYSTEMIC-FUNCTIONAL STUDY OF *DEAR ZOO* WITHIN THE TEXTUAL METAFUNCTION

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ABSTRACT

Based mainly on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and Kress and van Leeuwen's Social Semiotics, this contribution attempts to employ a multimodal, verbal and visual analysis of the picture book *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell within the textual metafunction. The early age of the children for whom the tale is intended (under-two) determines the verbal and visual choices made by Campbell to help the child identify the main characters in the story and follow the development of their actions. The animals from the zoo are given special prominence both in the verbiage, where they are omitted by the use of suspense points in rhematic position, and in the visual mode, where they and their crates come to prominence through color contrast and saturation. Words and images contribute differently to the overall organization of the tale, since they give complementary and, in turn, essential information to the understanding of the narrative plot.

KEY WORDS: Systemic-functional linguistics, social semiotics, multimodality, theme, composition.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es realizar un análisis multimodal del libro ilustrado *Dear Zoo* de Rod Campbell dentro de la metafunción textual. Las herramientas utilizadas para estudiar los modos semióticos, verbal y visual, del cuento son la Lingüística Sistémico-Funcional de Halliday y la Semiótica Visual de Kress y van Leeuwen. La edad de los niños para los que el libro ilustrado ha sido escrito (0-2 años) determina las estrategias visuales y verbales adoptadas por Campbell para facilitar la identificación de los personajes principales y la comprensión del desarrollo argumental de la historia. Los animales enviados por el zoológico reciben una prominencia especial tanto en el modo verbal, donde no se hace una referencia explícita a ellos, como en el visual, donde la saturación y el contraste de color utilizados ayudan a mantener la atención del joven receptor. Palabras e imágenes contribuyen de forma distinta a la organización textual y composicional del cuento, aportando informaciones complementarias y, a su vez, necesarias, para la comprensión del mensaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: lingüística sistémico-funcional, semiótica social, multimodalidad, tema, composición.



1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to analyze how verbal and visual modes complement one another in the picture book, *Dear Zoo*, written and illustrated by Rod Campbell and first published in 1982 by Abelard-Schuman Ltd. The edition used for this analysis is the version that came out in Campbell Books, an imprint of Macmillan Children's Books, in 1998.¹ The tools used to carry out this study are Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) (2004) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics (2006). By adopting the systemic-functional approach, I will attempt to determine how the information is organized so that the tale creates a coherent whole (textual metafunction). In addition, by applying Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics, the compositional meaning of the picture book will be analyzed in the visual mode, and compared with the information that the analysis of the verbiage reveals.²

Dear Zoo is nowadays established as a classic picture book for very young children, specifically children under the age of two. The tale tells the story of a child who writes a letter to the zoo to request a pet. The child receives several unsuitable animals, the identities of which are revealed when the flaps of the packing cases or crates where they are kept are lifted up: a roaring lion, an elephant, a giraffe, etc. Finally, after several attempts, the zoo sends the perfect pet, a puppy. Then the child decides to keep him. The plot is simple and repetitive, two characteristics typically associated with picture books intended for toddlers.

This paper is structured in the following way: firstly, SFL and Visual Social Semiotics accounts are briefly described. Later, the textual/compositional metafunctions are studied in order to show how verbal and visual components complement each other to create a tale that is both easy to understand for young children and, in turn, attractive enough to keep their attention alive. Thus, aspects related to thematic progression, information value, framing and salience are examined in both the verbiage and the images. Finally, the conclusions are obtained from the comparison of the meanings transmitted by intersemiotic relations established between words and illustrations.

2. SFG AND VISUAL SOCIAL SEMIOTICS

The theoretical foundation for this analysis is mainly extrapolated from the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) approach of language as a social semiotic

¹ My sincere thanks to María Jesús Pérez (Universidad de La Laguna) and Maria Baldarelli (Suffolk University) for their comments and suggestions on a previous draft of this paper.

² The term "verbiage" is used here to reference the verbal mode of a multimodal message. Thus, the verbiage is the part of the message that is expressed through words or verbal language. Images, sounds, gestures, etc. are other semiotic modes employed in multimodal messages to convey meaning.

process (Halliday 1978, 2004). SFL deals with the way texts are articulated to be appropriate for particular situations of use. Halliday develops a Systemic Functional approach in relation to verbal language and offers a set of grammatical systems which realize the three metafunctions of language. In them, the clause can be analyzed simultaneously on the basis of how it represents the world (experiential metafunction), how it enacts social relations (interpersonal), and finally, according to the way it contributes to the organization of the clause as message (textual). Halliday's Systemic Functional approach has been extended to other semiotic modes other than language, including images and sounds (Halliday, *Language*; Kress and van Leeuwen). In fact, multimodal SFL deals with visual texts that are presumed to make meaning in the three metafunctional domains referred to before. In this sense, Kress and van Leeuwen propose a framework in which the system of choices available is specified to create meaning in visual artefacts on the basis of the three metafunctions developed by Halliday.

Linguistic structures are realized by processes, participants and circumstances to convey ideational meaning. In turn, visual messages can also communicate experiential meaning through narrative processes and some kind of classification or analysis through conceptual processes³ (Kress and van Leeuwen). Regarding interpersonal function, the visual grammar offers possibilities for evaluating the visual material depicted on the basis on inter-relationships established between the Represented Participants of a composition and the viewer.⁴ Finally, within the textual metafunction, Kress and van Leeuwen develop meaning making principles of compositional organization. Three areas are considered in this sense: information value, framing and salience, which are further developed in the following sections.

2.1. THE TEXTUAL METAFUNCTION

Of the three metafunctions that make up multimodal SFL, the textual/compositional is the focus of this study as the aim of this paper is to identify the choices available to the writer/illustrator to organize *Dear Zoo* both textually and visually as a coherent communicative artefact. As previously stated, the textual

³ In narrative images, the represented participants are connected by vectors of motion (actional) or by eyelines (reactional) and they are represented as doing something to or for one another. These narrative patterns, realized by specific visual techniques, serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change and transitory spatial arrangements (Kress and van Leeuwen 79; Royce 70). In contrast, conceptual images do not involve action or reaction on the part of the Represented Participants (RPs), but represent participants in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, structure or meaning (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

⁴ Image act and gaze, social distance and intimacy, horizontal angle and involvement and, finally, vertical angle and power, with their respective classifications, are the interactive features that Kress and van Leeuwen distinguish in their Grammar of Visual Design. For more information about the features related to the interactive metafunction, see Kress and van Leeuwen and Moya.



metafunction makes reference to the resources language has for creating coherent texts with relevance to the contexts in which they are produced and understood. Within these, the thematic structure gives the clause its character as a message, as a communicative event, analyzed as a two-part structure with thematic and rhematic elements.

Within SFL, Theme is considered a predication-internal entity (Halliday, *Introduction*, rev.; Martin and Rose; Moya and Pinar; Moya and Ávila) and is defined on the basis of two criteria: “The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context” (Halliday, *Introduction*, rev. 64). The rest of the message is where the clause moves after the point of departure and is called the Rheme, which in English always follows the initial position.

Theme is considered to be a meaningful choice that specifies the angle from which the speaker/writer projects their message: “It is what sets the scene for the clause itself and positions it in relation to the unfolding text” (Halliday, *Introduction*, rev. 66). In fact, Halliday distinguishes between marked and unmarked themes in order to analyze the communicative intentions that lead the speaker/writer to move a clause constituent from its typical place to the initial position of the clause. A theme is unmarked when it coincides with the subject of a declarative clause, the finite form or the wh-element of an interrogative modal clause or the predicate of an imperative structure. However, the speaker/writer does not always use a prototypical pattern; on many occasions the realization of his/her message requires a marked option with some specific informative connotations. Marked themes either provide some kind of setting for the clause or express a feature of contrast or emphasis.

Eggin’s query into, “how much of what comes first in a clause counts as Theme” (Eggin 275-276) is of interest to us here. Although in many cases the theme is simple and is realized by a sole constituent, there are also clauses that present a more complex initial structure. In fact, Halliday admits the possibility that within the thematic part of a clause complex, three different types of theme can be included: ideational, interpersonal and textual themes. Halliday affirms that the theme of a clause extends from its beginning up to the first element that fulfills a function in transitivity and that this thematic constituent, mainly if it is a participant, tends to be topical (Halliday, *Introduction; Introduction*, rev.).

The theme is primarily concerned with the organization of information within individual clauses. However, linguistic studies over the past decades have assessed the theme also as a function that transcends the limits of the clause in order to contribute decisively to the global articulation of a text, establishing its method of development (Fries). This is probably the greatest merit that Daneš has added to studies on Functional Sentence Perspective and textual organization. Through his Thematic Progression theory, he demonstrates the importance of the thematic clause structure, with its two elements, theme and rheme, in the organization and cohesion of the message. Daneš (118-120) distinguishes three basic thematic progression patterns: 1. Simple Linear Thematic Progression or TP with linear thematization of rhemes. In this progression, the rheme of a clause becomes the thematic constituent of the following clause, giving the text a dynamic character; 2. TP with a con-



tinuous or constant theme. In this progression the same theme, although not necessarily carried out by the same clausal element, is shared by a series of utterances, each of which adds new information about it; 3. TP with derived Theme. In this model, a broad spectrum Theme, which Daneš calls hypertheme, gives rise to the themes of the clauses which follow to form a chain of subthemes deriving from the general Theme.⁵ Although often texts do not conform to these models strictly, Daneš' Thematic Progression theory was and continues to be a necessary point of reference for many posterior studies on textual organization. Therefore, I shall keep it in mind to analyze the structural organization of *Dear Zoo*.

2.2. THE MEANING OF COMPOSITION

Equivalent to textuality in verbal language is composition in images. Here the theme and rheme realizations of the textual metafunction are applied to pictures to find out how a visual composition is organized and structured. The analysis of compositional features of a multimodal text determines the extent to which some elements within an image are given more information value and relative salience than others. In addition to the analysis of the visual in relation to the verbal elements, the intersemiosis in compositional terms also involves the study of the visual components in relation to each other through the main principles of composition, that is, information value, visual salience and visual framing (see Table I, Kress and van Leeuwen; Royce; Unsworth).

TABLE I: COMPOSITIONAL MEANING. BASIC SYSTEMS
(ADAPTED FROM KRESS AND VAN LEEUWEN)

<i>Information Value</i>	Given/New (Left / Right) Ideal / Real (Top / Bottom) Centre / Margin
<i>Framing</i>	Similarities and rhymes of color and form Vectors that connect elements Absence of frame lines or empty spaces between elements
<i>Salience</i>	Size Sharpness of focus Tonal contrast Color contrast Foreground / Background

⁵ The potential of thematic progression is not exhausted by these three patterns. Daneš himself proposes other more complex textual structures that comply with a combination of the three described models. Among the possible combinations, Daneš highlights the Split Rheme Pattern in which the rheme of a clause can be divided into two or more elements, generally coordinated, each of which is taken up as a theme in following clauses.



2.2.1. *Information Value*

Information value, the first feature of compositional meaning, varies according to the placement of elements within the page. They can be placed in the centre or margin. Another possibility is for them to be positioned on the right or left, which is called given/new structure. The final placement is on the top or lower half of the page, which is referred to as ideal/real. Visual Information makes significant use of the centre, placing one or more elements in the middle and others around it in the margin. In the structure centre/margin, the RPs in the centre provide the nucleus of information to which surrounding and marginal elements are subservient (Kress and van Leeuwen).

With regard to the given/new distinction, in written texts given is presented as something the receiver already knows, as a familiar and agreed-upon point of departure for the message to commence. New is presented as something not yet known (Halliday, *Introduction*, rev.). Following Halliday (*Introduction; Introduction*, rev.), Kress and van Leeuwen and Kress associate the right and left zones of an image with the new and given states of information respectively. Being on the left-hand side (verso) or on the right (recto) are locations that have significance. Participants and events on the left-hand side of a visual display are considered as something already known, as a familiar point of departure for reading the picture. However, this does not imply that those visual elements located on the left are necessarily known to the viewer; they are merely presented as such (Kress and van Leeuwen; Hoperabundo and Ventola; Ventola and Moya). Contrastingly, the right hand-side presents new information, something or somebody the viewer must pay special attention to (Kress and van Leeuwen).

Finally, another way of organizing the elements in an image is provided by the division between “ideal” and “real.” The ideal is presented on the top of the picture and is normally emotive and imaginary. It is the idealized or generalized essence of the information. Real, however, is more specific information (details), and more practical, oriented information (consequences, directions for action). Kress and van Leeuwen consider the top and bottom of an image as the realms of the ideal and the real respectively.⁶

2.2.2. *Framing*

Framing is the second feature of compositional meaning and determines whether the elements of a composition are either given separate identities, or are represented as belonging together. While framing normally creates a sense of de-

⁶ *Dear Zoo* is not structured in such a way that a clear top and bottom can be located. However, the other two features of information value: given/new and centre/margin reveal interesting features concerning the visual composition of the picture book (see section 3.2).



tachment between the picture and the reader, and stresses the individuality and differentiation of an element, the absence of framing makes it part of a group. The fact that an illustration is unframed (that is, a picture that covers the whole area of a page or a double spread) constitutes an invitation to view the story from within. Elements can be grouped together by continuity of color and shape and by connecting vectors. The lack of frame lines and empty spaces between the RPs may also join elements together. These sets of choices stress group identity, involvement and absence of social distance between the RPs and the viewer (Moebius 141; Nodelman 51; Nikolajeva and Scott 62).

Color is also one of the key features of framing. Besides building up the basic image, color fulfils another two visual functions in multimodal texts such as: i. bringing a character into the focus of attention, and ii. connecting or separating important objects both within simple pictures and across whole sequences (Lewis 105).

2.2.3. *Salience*

Lastly, salience, the remaining feature of composition, refers to the ability of an RP to capture the viewer's attention. Salience establishes a hierarchy of importance among the elements in an image; the most important RP is that which normally gets the greater salience. Salience is determined by a variety of features such as: (i) size (the larger the RP, the greater its salience), (ii) sharpness of focus (RPs have less salience when they are out of focus), (iii) tonal contrast (areas of high tonal contrast have greater salience), (iv) color contrast (strongly saturated colors have greater salience than soft colors), and finally, (v) the placement of an object in the foreground and background of a composition (an RP in the foreground has greater salience than an RP in the background). However, none of these criteria alone is sufficient to measure visual relevance, which is always dependent on the complex interaction between all the elements referred to before (Kress and van Leeuwen).

3. ANALYSIS, METHODOLOGY AND EXEMPLIFICATION

So far, the tools available from SFL and Visual Social Semiotics to analyze the meanings transmitted by the verbal and non-verbal modes in *Dear Zoo* have been dealt with in section 2. SFL is a powerful tool to describe the textual and thematic patterns reflected in the verbiage. In turn, the Grammar of Visual Design proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen provides a descriptive framework for the interpretation of the components in the visual mode. This section starts with the textual analysis of *Dear Zoo* and then deals with its compositional features. The analysis of the interaction of both semiotic resources will shed light on the way verbal and visual components complement each other to convey meaning.

For the purposes of this paper it has been assumed that all major clauses have a thematic constituent located in initial position. In the case of compound



complexes, Halliday (*Introduction*, rev. 394) states that “...the point to bear in mind is that there will be two thematic domains—that of the clause nexus and that of the clause.” However, the tale at hand has no compound or embedded clauses as all the structures used in it are independent. I have also considered that thematic progression depends on repeated reference and not only repeated word-form. Thus, all referring expressions, independently of their nominal or pronominal form, can play a fundamental part in the thematic development of a stretch of text.

Concerning the visual elements of the tale, 8 double spreads have been distinguished. In them, text and images are intertwined. All the double spreads contain one illustration on the right-hand side which is both preceded and followed by short clauses. Due to space restrictions, only two figures have been reproduced here. The quantitative data obtained are interpreted from a qualitative and functional perspective last.

3.1. TEXTUAL MEANING

In this section, I will deal with the textual analysis of *Dear Zoo*. The exploration of the verbal and visual choices made by Campbell to create textual meaning will enable us to identify the strategies used in this tale to ease the understanding of the plot and, in turn, tantalize and retain the young child’s attention. Firstly, I will examine the typology of themes that most frequently predominate in the verbiage. Then the thematic progression of the picture book will be determined in order to establish its overall organization.

As is shown in Table II, both simple and multiple themes have been identified, but the simple type occurs more frequently (70.4%). Evidence of this fact is shown in excerpt 1 where the thematic slot of the clause is realized by a sole ideational element that makes reference either to the child who wrote to the zoo to request a pet, to his friends at the zoo, referred to by the pronoun, *they*, and to the animal itself, realized by the pronoun, *he*.

TABLE II. SIMPLE AND MULTIPLE THEMES

	ABSOLUTE VALUES	VALUES IN PERCENTAGE
Simple Theme	19	70.4%
MultipleTheme	8	29.6%
TOTAL	27	100%

(1) I wrote to the zoo to send me a pet. They sent me an... [Illustration] He was too big! I sent him back

There are also eight instances of multiple themes, formed by textual (mainly, *so*, also *and*) and experiential components. As can be seen in excerpt 2, these textual themes function as markers of temporal continuity in the narrative structure. The

textual theme, *so*, recurrently starts the beginning of a new sequence in which a new animal is sent again until the child finds out that it is not appropriate enough. After the textual components, the ideational themes make reference to the main characters, the zoo, and the animals sent. No interpersonal elements have been found since there are neither vocatives nor modal adjuncts in the initial slot of the clause. In addition, as all clauses are declarative in mood, there are no finite operators or *wh*-elements located in thematic position.

(2) So they (theme) thought very hard, and (ellipsis, they) sent me a... [Illustration]
He was perfect! I kept him.

Regarding the marked or unmarked typology of themes (see Table III), all themes (100%) are unmarked or prototypical realizations. Themes are realized by clause constituents that fulfill the syntactic function of subject in a declarative mood structure (see excerpts 1 and 2). In excerpt 2, the ideational theme is omitted, but it can be deduced from the previous clause, the people at the zoo. So it has been counted for the purpose of thematicity as an ideational theme preceded by a textual component, *and*.

TABLE III. UNMARKED AND MARKED THEMES

	ABSOLUTE VALUES	VALUES IN PERCENTAGE
Unmarked Th.	27	100%
Marked Theme	0	0%
TOTAL	100	100%

Added to this is the notable coincidence throughout the text of the grammatical function of subject, the textual function of Theme, and the pragmatic-discourse function of topic carried out by the main characters (the zoo, the child that requests the pet, and the different animals depicted in the illustrations). In fact, theme and topic overlap in 100% of the cases counted (see Table IV). By following this strategy, the entities about which information is given are activated from the beginning of the clause, usually in subject position. Even the new topic that activates the main character in the first paragraph of the story (*I*) is placed in the initial slot of the clause: “I wrote to the zoo the send me a pet”. In addition, the absolute correspondence of theme and topic favours the use of syntactic parallelism to mark the succession of the actions in time.⁷ All this corresponds with the idea of facilitat-

⁷ Similar to our results, after establishing a comparison between newspaper sports commentaries and other genres, Ghadessy finds that the most frequent themes tend to be related to the major text participants in a specific text.



ing the young child's understanding of the plot. The book is intended for two-year-olds and under, and therefore the plot should be easy for them to decode.

TABLE IV. THEME AND TOPIC OVERLAPPING

	ABSOLUTE VALUES	VALUES IN PERCENTAGE
Theme and topic overlap	27	100%
Theme and topic do not overlap	0	0%
TOTAL	27	100%

The analysis of the thematic structure of the tale would be incomplete without the study of the thematic progression of its clauses and how these are thematically organized to achieve coherence. As shown in Table V, an overall view of the thematic progression of *Dear Zoo* confirms that part of it, (29.6%), follows a linear theme pattern (Daneš), realized by placement of the different animals sent from the zoo in either the rhematic and thematic slots of the clause. As evidence in excerpt 3, the ellipsis makes reference to the animal hidden in the crate. The illustration, then, plays a key role in its identification. By lifting up the flaps of the crates the child can find out what the zoo has dispatched. After the illustration, the animal depicted is placed in the thematic position of the next clause, favoring the linear progression pattern. In it, the theme of the second clause, *he*, comes from the omitted rheme of the preceding clause. These chains give the tale a sense of dynamism, as they allow Campbell to place the different animals in the two main positions of the clause, the beginning and the end.

(3) So they sent me a... [Illustration] He was too fierce! I sent him back.

The ellipsis in the rhematic slots of the clauses of the tale are a clue for the adult to read the syntactically incomplete verbal material with a rising intonation contour and increasing volume. Since few two-year-olds can read, the book is certainly intended to be read aloud by caregivers. The missing information in the verbal mode makes the child participate and interact with the adult reading the tale and in so doing he is socialized into the reading experience. He will learn to fold the right page over the left one, as opposed to Hebrew or Arabic speaking and reading children, who learn the reverse. The child-listener will probably be active in turning the pages, opening the flaps and identifying the animals when the pictures are uncovered, calling out their names at the appropriate time. In short, the suspense points in rheme position lead the child to find the missing information in the visual mode. This reinforces his apprenticeship into the dialogic nature of language, where the mutual completion of utterances plays an important role (Purver et al.). Thus, the pictures in this tale do not only serve to illustrate the story, but to involve the child-listener in a dialogic interaction with the adult who is reading the picture book aloud.



TABLE V: PATTERNS OF THEMATIC PROGRESSION

THEMATIC PROGRESSION	ABSOLUTE VALUES	VALUES IN PERCENTAGE
Constant TP	1	3.7%
Linear TP	8	29.6%
Derived TP	1	3.7%
No TP	17	63%
TOTAL	27	100%

The linear TP, whose dynamic character might cause certain difficulties for the young child, turns out to be an appropriate structural tool in this picture book. It is used create interaction and to give dynamism to the story since the plot is basically centered on few characters: the zoo, the child that requests a pet and, mainly, the different animals drawn in the illustrations.

Although the linear thematic scheme is the most predominant pattern, this is not the only type. There is also one sequence of constant theme progression in the last double spread. In it, the entity, *they*, which makes reference to the zoo, is maintained in a sequence of two clauses, although the second time it is omitted: “So they thought very hard, and (ellipsis) sent me a...” When two clauses are linked by coordination—in a paratactic structure—the subject of the second clause (*they*) may be elided. In such a case the omitted subject counts as the topical theme within a constant theme progression. Constant theme is also a very appropriate pattern for children’s narratives, for in this way, given information is reiterated so that the young child does not lose the thread of the plot (Moya and Ávila).

Only one example of derived TP has been identified in this tale, located specifically in the first double spread: “I (theme) wrote to the zoo to send me a pet. They (theme) sent me an...” The fact that the singular “the zoo” is referred to anaphorically as “they” makes it an instance of derived theme; the child must infer that it is “the people at the zoo” who are being referred to. The reason for the low presence of this thematic pattern in comparison to the favored linear TPs is that the latter organizes the text in a way that makes it easier for the young child to understand the thread of the story. The frequent utilization of derived thematic progressions might have required inferences and associations that would have gone beyond the cognitive ability of children at such an early age.

The linear thematic progression identified is continually altered throughout the tale by the recurrent reference made to the child protagonist (*I*). This way there is an alternation of elements placed in the thematic slot of the clause: *I*, *they* and *he*; the last represents the animal dispatched on eight different occasions. Therefore, as is shown in excerpt 4, although some fragments that follow a constant, derived or linear progression are found, in its totality the tale does not follow a defined thematic pattern due to the alternating nature of the elements that occupy the initial position of the clause. This alternation of thematic constituents lends



dynamism to the story without adding too much difficulty for the understanding of the plot:

- (4) So they (theme, the zoo) sent me a... [Illustration] He (theme, the animal) was too naughty! I (theme, the child protagonist in the story) sent him back.

3.2. COMPOSITIONAL FEATURES

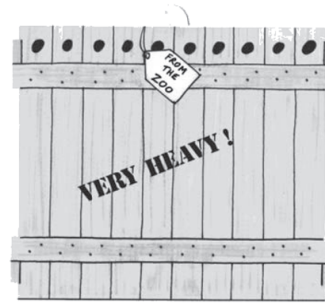
After analyzing the textual aspects of *Dear Zoo*, now I will focus the attention of the study on its compositional characteristics in order to find out how the illustrations contribute to the general organization of the tale and to facilitate the understanding of the message to the young reader. As previously stated, picture books are composite wholes. Thus, a complete understanding of the message they convey requires the exploration of both their visual and verbal constituents and their final effect on each other. Children under two are unable to decode written information but tend to be good readers of visual texts. For this reason in children's literature, both visual elements and verbal information are used simultaneously.

Compositional meaning is concerned with the organization of the RPs within an image and, as previously stated, it involves features such as the distribution of information, framing and salience. With regard to the distribution of given and new elements, in the eight double spreads of the tale, a clearly repetitive information sequence is followed through verbal and visual elements. In the first double spread, included here as Figure 1, both the verso and the recto introduce new information. The verso of the first page opens with unknown information: "I wrote to the zoo to send me a pet. They sent me an..." The right hand side of the double spread also offers new elements: (i) an illustration where the animal sent from the zoo can be seen, (ii) a written part that describes its negative characteristics: "He was too big!" (iii) and the final decision made by the child protagonist to send the animal back.

However, from the second to the eight double spreads the information pattern followed responds to the prototypical tendency adopted in the English language. The message in English tends to be started with given information and finished with unknown elements. In the aforementioned illustrations the verbiage on the left-hand side presents information that could be considered familiar to the reader (Kress and van Leeuwen) and is somehow demonstrated in the tale: "So they sent me a...". The illustrations on the right-hand side and the verbal elements placed beneath it, however, introduce new information: the different animal sent from the zoo, his unsuitable features and the decision to send him back again: "He was too grumpy! I sent him back" (see double spread four, inserted here as Figure 2). The textual ellipsis of the left-hand side is filled by the illustrations that recurrently reveal the identity of the new animals dispatched from the zoo. This way, the visual mode contextualizes the verbiage, adding newness and definitiveness to the story. Thus, the child will probably perceive the visual material in the way it is presented



I wrote to the zoo
to send me a pet.
They sent me an ...



He was too big!
I sent him back.

Figure 1: They sent me an elephant.

So they sent me a ...



He was too grumpy!
I sent him back.

Figure 2: They sent me a camel.

by the artist, that is, from given-to-new progression, represented in western writing cultures as left-page to right-page sequencing.⁸

⁸This does not imply, however, that the child will necessarily scan the visual material in the way proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen since she is being read to and is free to ignore anything but the identification of the flap.

From the first to the last double spread, the same pattern of structure and design is employed since in all them, the recto, the right-hand side, shows the young child a new animal whose identity has to be revealed by lifting up the flaps of the crates where it is kept. On the verso, the left-hand side of the double spread, only written language is offered. This repetitive pattern is a constant throughout practically the whole story and guarantees its temporal sequence, facilitating the young reader's comprehension of the plot.

Framing is another aspect of the compositional metafunction. In *Dear Zoo*, the animals sent to the child protagonist are presented within frames, as they are kept in their different crates. However, the child-reader is given the chance to open the packing boxes by lifting up their different flaps or doors. This way the animals are usually presented unframed, suggesting certain proximity between them and the child-reader. Every animal that is rejected is kept back in its crate until a new parcel arrives. While the use of frames is an indication of social distance between the RPs and the young child, the absence of frames brings their worlds closer. When the animals arrive and are sent back, they are presented in their framed enclosures. However, once their identities are revealed, they are shown outside frames and close to the viewer.

Finally, with regards to salience, there are no visual elements in the background. Therefore, the animals and their packing boxes are the only visual participants that receive prominence. They are placed in the center of the right hand side and are also highlighted by use of colour contrast and saturation. The crates receive the greatest saturation and contrast of colours, essentially reds, browns, greens, yellows and oranges. The rest of the double spread is characterized by the presence of the white colour, which separates the verbiage from the visual components.

4. CONCLUSION

Following the theoretical frameworks of SFL and Visual Social Semiotics, my aim was to identify the verbal and visual choices made by Campbell to convey textual and compositional meanings in the picture book, *Dear Zoo*. In this way, I have determined how the verbiage and the visual components complement each other to create textual meaning and make the story coherent.

The textual analysis reveals that there is an association between the point of departure of the clause as message and the three main characters in the story, the child-protagonist (*I*), his friends at the zoo (*they*), and the animals dispatched from the zoo. The early age of the children for whom the tale is intended determines their thematic and topical patterning, mainly organized in simple and linear thematic structures. These textual patterns which prompt the utilization of syntactic parallelism and recurrent structures can only be achieved thanks to the intersemiosis of verbal and visual elements. The gaps of the rhematic slot of the sentences located on the verso of the double spreads (So they sent me a...) are filled in by the RPs depicted in the visual mode, which provide the missing information. So, words and images contribute differently to the overall organization of the tale, maintaining the



child's attention through the narrative plot. The shift of the narrative course from words (they sent me a/an...) to images (the animals themselves) takes place every time a new animal is sent from the zoo and makes a perfect symbiosis to facilitate the understanding of the plot to the very young child. Unable to recognize the written graphemes, he can find out the identity of the animals sent by the zoo from the illustrations. In addition, the missing information in verbal language and the necessity to find it in the visual mode encourage the child to establish a dialogic interaction with the adult. The role of the young child is to turn the multimodal text into a dialogic linguistic experience with two participants, the caregiver who reads the story and the child himself, who has to visualize and identify the different animals dispatched from the zoo.

Thus, the study of the images and their relationship with the text clearly reveals that both modes, the verbal and the visual, complement one another so that the tale is easy to understand, and in turn, attractive to the young child. The verbal and visual choices made by Campbell regarding textual and compositional meaning help the child to identify the main characters in the story and follow the development of their actions. The animals from the zoo are given special prominence both in the verbiage, where they are omitted by the use of suspense points in rhematic position, and in the visual mode, where they and their crates are given the greater prominence through colour contrast and saturation. Artists and writers must become aware of the potential of combining verbal and visual modes in picture books, so that they offer complementary meanings, without pushing the limits drawn by the cognitive and literary abilities of their young readers.

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