

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-261-6-37>

MULTIMODALITY IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY FOR CHILDREN

МІЛЬТИМОДАЛЬНІСТЬ В СУЧАСНІЙ ДИТЯЧІЙ ПОЕЗІЇ

Pikalova A. O.

*кандидат філологічних наук,
Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department
of Foreign Philology,
МЕ «Kharkiv Humanitarian and
Pedagogical Academy» Kharkiv
Regional Council,
Kharkiv, Ukraine*

Пікалова А. О.

*кандидат філологічних наук, доцент,
доцент кафедри іноземної філології,
КЗ «Харківська гуманітарно-
педагогічна академія» Харківської
обласної ради
м. Харків, Україна*

Scientists have managed to focus on communication not as an exclusively linguistic phenomenon, but as a process of forming meanings with the help of different modes. They can be «image, writing, colour, layout, as well as knowledge in specific arrangements for a specific audience» [6, p. 139]. Following M. Halliday's [2; 3; 4] semiotic approach to language, G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen [6] identified the foundations for researching of multimodality. It is concerned as a result of the integration of language and other resources. The scholars refer to multimodality as «the use of different modus» [6, p. 139].

Modern technology has provided the variety of changes in books, particularly in the way how the text might be read. «Whether in the print or electronic media, whether in newspapers, magazines, CDROMs or sites, whether as public relations materials, advertisements or as informational materials of all kinds, most texts now involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic or sound elements, designed as coherent (often at the first level visual rather than verbal) entities by means of layout» [6, p. 17].

Contemporary books for children reflect the complexity of our multimedia world. They are constantly transforming according to technological and cultural changes. G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen [6] contemplation are a substantial shift to the importance of images in children's books particularly in poetry for children. This paper focuses on the interaction of language and images in children's poetry, where rhyme or verse is considered as multimodal text.

Some scientists have written about illustrations in children's literature [7; 8; 9; 11]. However, rhymed texts for children have not been the subject of an extensive research from the point of multimodality.

Using the terms of M. Halliday [3, p. 53], G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen [6] argue that visual design, like language, and all semiotic modes perform three main metafunctions: 1. ideational (representation of the world around and inside us); 2. interpersonal (social interactions and relationships); 3. textual («the world of the text», the elements of which are interconnected both with each other and with the surrounding world – the context) [6, p. 16].

Children are very sensitive to visual images. Recognition of this sensitivity as one of the main features of children's acquaintance of the surrounding world has led to the creation and publication of children's books with illustrations.

«For toddlers and other children of pre-school age, the pictorial code is a more direct means of communication than the verbal code» [10, p. 25]. Even beginning readers «understand the language and the message better when there are many pictures. Thus, «illustration accentuates the cognitive function» [10, p. 25].

The younger the reader, the more important illustrations are for him / her. The content of pictures, the color palette, and the technique of drawing are also important, which would develop figurative thinking, help to comprehend the meaning and evoke positive emotions in the child. The child receives the first information about the world not verbally, but visually and audibly, so it is extremely difficult to teach writing and reading without a picture. As the reader grows older, the drawing begins to acquire only a supporting role.

Returning to semiotic modes which perform the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual metafunctions, we are going to demonstrate the interaction of language and images in the poems by Julia Donaldson, written for children of different ages (toddlers, preschool children, beginner readers).

The ideational metafunction includes actions, characters and circumstances. Actions (movement) are verbalised with the help of verbs, which denote the material processes of movement, and visual vectors of movement, which express the dynamism of the illustration. The way of illustrating involves a full or metonymic image (parts of body). Circumstances are also the element of ideational meaning which refers to the time and place of action.

J. Donaldson's creativity for children from two to five years old contains the verse «One Mole Digging a Hole» [1] with illustrations by Nick Sharratt. Large font and bright pictures familiarize children with numbers from one to ten teaching them to count, for example: «*One mole/ digging a hole/ Two snakes/ with garden rakes/ Three bears/ picking pears/ Four foxes/ filling boxes/ Five storks/ with garden forks/ Six parrots/ pulling up carrots/ Seven frogs/ chopping logs/ Eight crows/ with a garden hose/ Nine doves/ in gardening gloves/ Ten bees/ pruning trees/ Everyone enjoying the sun!*» [1].

«One Mole Digging a Hole» [1] is distinguished by its graphic design. In this book the double page layout is used. On the left page, between the lines

there is a number corresponding to the text. Moreover, there are bright and colourful butterflies drawn in this quantity. At the same time, the images of butterflies are located as a particular frame of the text. This frame is an important element of the textual meaning, which enhances the emotional impact of the image. On the right page, there is an illustration with an appropriate number of animals and what actions they perform according to the content. In this book images occupy a significant space as it is illustrated in Figure 1.

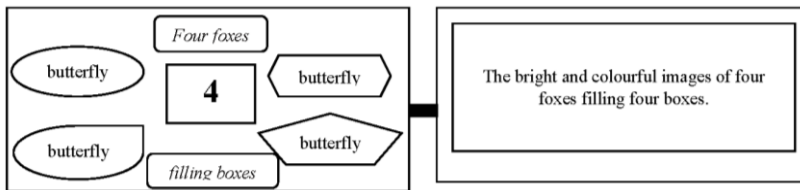


Fig. 1. Scheme of the double page layout in the book «One Mole Digging a Hole» by J. Donaldson

As it is shown in the above scheme the ideational metafunction includes actions of characters (fill the boxes → foxes). Actions (movement) are verbalised with the help of verbs, which denote the material processes of movement, and visual vectors of movement, which express the dynamism of the illustration. The way of illustrating involves a full image (body of an animal). Circumstances are also the element of ideational meaning which refers to the time and place of action (in the garden).

The interpersonal metafunction covers a number of aspects related to the interaction between the reader and the characters, between the poet and the reader. As children's perception is turned to the main thing and disregards everything secondary, images of foxes retain their specificity and recognizability.

Images of foxes filling the boxes clarify and extend the meaning of the text as little readers can find out the additional information (what foxes are filling the boxes? how many boxes? not all the foxes are filling the boxes, one of them is dropping the box). Thus, the textual metafunction is actualized.

As for linguistic features, the quite simple syntax of the poetic speech is represented in the verse «One Mole Digging a Hole» [1]. What is more, the absence of punctuation marks attracts attention. The poem ends with an exclamatory sentence in which there is a single punctuation mark (*Everyone enjoying the sun!*).

To conclude, the design of J. Donaldson's book of verses for pre-school children and bright colourful images in the illustrations increase emotional, cognitive and decorative possibilities. The dominance of illustrations over the text maintains an aspect that a child does not read yet or is just learning to read. As the child considers the text as a picture the large font size helps her / him to look for already familiar letters in the text. In general, images in books of poetry for pre-school children tempt children to interact with text, provide stimulation and promotion of children's creativity, supply mental foundation for the children-readers, and encourage children's language and literacy development. Thus, in children's poetry multimodality refers to the use of multiple modes, which fulfill the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual metafunctions.

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