

The Structure of Discourse: Visual Semiotic in Picture Book of "Creation" by Wolf Erlbruch

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Abstract

Illustration of children's books, such as the concept of childhood, has been shaped by a wide range of different choices, and each Illustrator finds a way to link and communicate with the text through the discourse device. Discourse means applying the language through individual action, illustration, also depicts the discourse of the work in the type of function and language manifestation; A language that in expression has a function different from that of a particular language which leads to a kind of active search in collective cultural visual memory. Although both the writing material and the image due to the use of the form of expression are text (a system of signifier relationships), their relationship complicates this point of view. Now the Illustrative Objective turn to make choice with a high responsibility. So the major questions are: 1. what is the process of illustrative discourse? 2. What is the design and process of semantic-signs of illustrated books? 3. Is there any certainty in imaging discourse for making meaning? This article sought to understand the shape and process of sign-semantics in illustrating children's books, and found that the relationship between text and image creates a semantic play that does not have semantic certainty, instead, an expert illustrator is trying to effectively shape this relationship to become dynamic. The main purpose of the article is to find the important semantic-sign features in the latent process of making meaning in the illustration, so the formation of semantics is more important as a result of the relationship between text and image. In this article, the spiritual theme of creation in illustrating has been studied in a work of Wolf Erlbruch as a sample of semantic study.

Keywords: Illustration, picture book, discourse, visual semiotic

Introduction

‘Visual semiotics aims to explain this important issue that visual texts cannot be deemed mere signs anymore. But it should be emphasized that such texts make a process in which meaning is not determined and formed a priori. In fact, the formation of semantics is the result of the plan of form and content on the one hand and the active presence of the discourse processor and discourse reader on the other hand. Meaning is not produced in isolation and behind closed doors. Not only does the meaning of visual texts depend on condition of formal speech (expression), but also it always contains other levels such as pragmatic level and physical level’ (shairi, 1392).

Louis Hjelmslev, a linguist, proposes a model in which expression and content (signifier and signified) contain form and substance. Based on this model, he presents a table in which he clearly explains his intended model:

Table 1_1. Hjelmslev’s substance and form)(Chandler,1394).

	Substance	Form
Signifier: expressional design	Expressional substance: physical matter of medium (such as images, recorded sounds, words printed on papers.	Expressional form: language, syntactic structures, ways and means.
Signified: content design	Content substance: "human content", textual world, subjects, genres.	Content form: "semantic structure", "subjective structure"(containing literature).

Before turning to the main subject, I should define illustrative discourse: a relation that produces meaning on the pragmatic level, depends on the processing of visual discourse with all the narrative structures of images, and addresses different layers of illustration that are formed by syntagmatic and tension relations among them. Consequently, there is a syntactic pattern that makes semantic signs dynamic and increscent. Accordingly, this article aims to study the value of the different layers of an image dependent on the form of expression, as manifested through the subject matter of this expression, which can be studied considering the physical level of expression. If we accept that ‘discourse means using language through individual action’ (Benveniste, 1970), the language of an image also demonstrates the ability of its discourse-figure through the performance and manifestation of language; the individual presence of the illustrator as a creator is realized through a linguistic act concerning a specific issue; and finally, the use of the language of an image should be considered as a dynamic search in the collective illustrative cultural memory, which takes place and is formed through the illustrator’s pragmatism.

The Study of the Picture Book

2-1. Text and Image

In this discussion, text means verbal text and image means visual text. A verbal text in association with an image produces a common text. In this book, the relation between the text and the image produces a semantic play that does not establish the certainty of meaning; rather, we are confronted with a signifier system, and living and dynamic meanings are produced. Meaning in act means that a signifier system existing in discourse is in motion: 'the human' on the opposite side of God in every frame experiences a new movement. Consequently, it is the meaning-making process in the structure of meaning-formation that takes shape successively amid different meaning-maker images. After looking at the images on the opposite side of the text, it can be said that the act and the aim that the illustrator envisions for each meaning-maker image, such as the moon, the sun, etc., are situated within a frame, a referential world, or a place to which meaning can refer us, and the images evoke simultaneous effects of meaning-maker images on each other in the mind of the addressee in order to cover the text and also to take a step beyond the text. In this context, simplifying images multiply the uncertainty of meaning and even make the image disregard age classes. This in itself elevates the competitive position of the illustrator in the world of illustration to higher levels of meaning-making.

In this section, we turn to illustrative interactions. Regarding the issue of the language of images and interaction, the important fact is that the relationship between the human eye and mind and the language of images is dynamic and mutual. In other words, to the extent that the language of images has a bearing on human beings, human beings also equally have a bearing on images. This means that the language of images aims to explain an issue or narrative. Along the same lines, the language of images, through iconic signs in illustration, is itself a tool that can be used to express issues of the internal and external worlds. For example, in all frames, the spatial features of the images place the addressee in a poetic discourse relation; on the one hand, the distance between the sun and the moon in image one and even the shape of the earth, which is illustrated with a strange curve, point to their features, and on the other hand, they show human beings' inferiority and humility before these blessings and their place on earth.



Image 1. Creation book. Elbruch

2-2. Expressional Form of Illustrative Discourse

In this illustrative work, the integrity of signs in design leads to capabilities in innovating convergent forms and a general atmosphere; the visual context has the capability of changing from one form to another—that is, we see a convergent wholeness in the illustration of this book. Consequently, the distance between us and the iconic signs is established, and the capacity of our sensory-perceptual sensitivity towards these signs is intellectually defined; the illustrator uses human personality to depict 'God', indeed the sign of 'God', through the strongest presence—a presence that is infinitely near to the viewer, whose distance to him or her is minimal, and which is tangible in such a way that it indicates that 'the human' is a small sample of God (something like a grandfather). In his design, the illustrator makes the greatest use of the meaning of the word 'nothing', as stated in the text (a day when there was nothing), when describing the setting. In fact, instead of showing the word 'nothing', the illustrator depicts the human and God as human icons sitting on a stool. When the addressee sees iconic signs, he or she spontaneously reacts to them—to God, who is sitting on a stool with a small ellipse suspended above his head. God, disguised in human features, is pondering with closed eyes, and the light-yellow ellipse signals that God is thinking. Simultaneously, God is on the opposite side from the human, who looks at God with completely open eyes. The illustrator may aim to show that the human is dependent on God in every way and that God is visible, but not to everyone. (image 2) In this image, there is no ambiguity in receiving signs, and

the illustrator's handling of the relationship between text and image to show the beginning of the world is effective to the extent that he depicts 'nothingness' as simply as possible. He has not even drawn a line to show the earth and the background, and simultaneously, the addressee does not feel any suspension in the image. One of the most important elements of the visual situation in the whole atmosphere of the work is the solidity of the expressive form achieved through the location, dimension, and orientation of characters, blessings, things, and animals in all parts of the book. The meaningful relationship between the forms of each element and each one's prominence, considering Elbruch's illustrative discourse value, finds its facial representation. Recognizing contrasting situations, using uncertainty in the image, and considering the location of each element, he provides the possibility of cognizing and exploring each phenomenon in the image. Recognizing line and the value of line, which is the most important element in design, he places the addressee in a specific discourse situation.



Image 2/ creation book/ Elbruch

2-3. A System of Codes in Illustrative Discourse

A system of codes is formed on the basis of the study of the relationship between the form of expression or signifier and the form of content or signified, with a certain power between the sign and its external referent in illustration. If we look at the images from the perspective of Greimasian sign-semantics (Shairi, 1392), in which 'being', 'ontology' and 'human situations' are discussed, it seems that, because the

illustrator chose the best approach in this book, the concept of God depends on an existential or internal sign deficiency—that is, the relationship with the sign; because of the inaccessibility of the internality or real existence of the sign, nothing more can be achieved than its appearance. The illustrator uses the image of a grandfather and an old, wise human to show the concept of God to the addressee. In doing so, returning to the principle of the sensory-perceptual sign, he approaches the existential dimension of sign-meanings. Using Husserl's phenomenological design (Lyotard, 1994), which returns to the origin of things, he approaches, instead of reality, the manifestation of reality or a representation of reality in order to create believability in the images that can produce a relationship and interaction with the addressee. Although it is true that the personal sign through which God is visualized is representational, it is not important that the representational sign be real. Rather, it should express the aim of the book on a specific level; what is also important is the way in which the illustrator impacts reality, especially the natural and sensory-perceptual world, to produce meaning.

2-4. Determinism in Illustrative Discourse

It is often the case that there are subjects that cannot be expressed by means of speech or writing; in other words, the linear and temporal relation of linguistic levels and units cannot convey those subjects. Hence, illustration as a visual language is a means of expression or narration. Discourse processing or narration through images has two sides: visible and invisible. The function, perception, and developing relationship between the two sides entail recognizing the structure of language, visual narrative modes, and the semantic level, codes, relations between signs, the medium, audience analysis, and many other components.

The discourse universe is also complex, creating new situations through minor changes, and it should be noted that the relationship created is not restricted to the interaction between the illustrator and the addressee. Rather, it can be affected by textual determinism and linguistic determinism. This illustrative discourse determinism is defined as the directionality of speech, the energies that lead to the production of the discourse-processor image language. Also, considering visual subjects, this issue provides a visual range and a perspective for producing images, such as the descriptions of visual texts that we read in writing to direct our views, including an image that we might have of 'God' or the sun, and a general narrative situation showing the first days of the creation of the world and human beings.

2-5. Pureness and Meaning in Illustrative Discourse

The science of imagination is the same as the science of visual sights. It is a science of the mirrorlike level and suspended images. This science, as a science of watching, credits the emergent nature of suspended samples between existence and nothingness. Images shown in the mirror have a phenomenal existence, and here we describe the necessity of the world of images; this means that we discover the

necessary existence of a visionary geography which contains towers, rivers, and magical mountains. For example, the shape of a statue in its pure form, which means free from wood, bronze, or marble—a statue which itself is the matter of a tender body—needs a phenomenal dimension that is the same as the existential dimension of the vision of a suspended image in the mirror; and the suspended image is not physical, nor is it merely spiritual, but it is something between them. This means that the image enjoys a nonphysical form. However, it has its own specific figure. Such an image belongs to the world in which ‘souls incarnate and physical things become ethereal.’ (Rahmati,1394).

Since the world of imagination is a purgatorial world and is the secret of the worlds, it acts as an intermediary for these worlds in order for them to come into existence. Meanwhile, the world of imagination is a ‘phenomenal’ place for spiritual beings (Corbin,1394).

This kind of visualization, which is made of outlines and colorful papers as a collage, somehow recalls the purity and importance of illustrative discourse, which is neither completely abstract nor completely objective.

However, it is a common level between the external (objective signifier) and internal (subjective signified) levels of the sign. This is because God and the human have been made of the same matter, and they both have the same color. God’s only differing components are its larger size and its beard. On the opposite side, the human is small and is wearing a hat. In fact, the illustrator considers only one hat for ‘the human’ regarding the external world, or the world in which we live, in order to represent his dependence on this world, and he abstains from any clothes and make-up; this seems to be a discourse value in illustration, which first easily distinguishes the expressional or formal level from the content level in illustrative work and second strengthens the relation between the units of each level. Hence, in the system defined by the illustrator, the relation between the form of expression and the form of content is very deep. Accordingly, the discourse value of the illustration is contextual-existential, sensory-perceptive, pragmatic, flowing, subjective, and dynamic. Signs make codes successively and with a strong rhythm, creating a new appearance. For example, in one frame, the power of ‘God’ is shown by the change in his hand size. If we look at the image carefully, in every frame we recognize that the system of codes is changed only by stretching one part, and only this stretching of the hands makes the output of the discourse-sign-semantics subject to innovation and a new look; semantic units have come into existence and come under the control of a novel system of discourse processing. (image3)



Image 3/ creation book/ Elbruch

3. Conclusion

Illustration has turned into discourse language through the practice of Erlbruch's individual language. Along the same lines, the function and emergence of language have led to a different semantic function, and this has activated a supreme level of illustration in the form of inquisition. This visual text has created an unconventional sympathy through following a determined plan, process, and, consequently, semantics. This process involves a high level of interaction with the addressee. In this piece, the interaction between the superficial plan and content, and the active and meaning-making presence of the discourse processor and the speaker, have been of significance in producing meaning. The illustrator believes that the meaning of a visual text not only depends on thematic issues, but covers all the visible and subjective facets to which the spectator can refer the meaning. By the same token, these images simultaneously leave their effects on different forms of meaning and the mind in order to narrate the text and display the image world of the illustrator. However, the ambiguity of meaning has doubled the impact of the addressee's interaction in this poetic work; even the age rating has been ignored, in that anyone at any age can look at the book. A kind of perfectionism of meaning has been born in this book, and these illustrations make every attempt to describe a subject which is formed by the elements of the image and separate forms of meaning-making essence (substance).

Erlbruch has proven that the coherence of signs in designs can lead to capabilities in creating convergent forms, that a change in one image can change the codified system, and that the relation between discourse, sign, and meaning can result in a new perspective.

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