

## 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

### 1. 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 and believes that expression and content (signifier and signified) contain form and substance. Considering this model, he proposes a table in which he explains clearly his intended model:

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

	Substance	Form
<b>Signifier:</b> 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.
<b>Signified:</b> content design	Content substance: "human content", textual world, subjects, genres.	Content form: "semantic structure", "subjective structure"(containing literature).

Before getting into the main subject, I should name it illustrative discourse; a relation which produces meaning on the pragmatic level and depends on the visual discourse processing with all narrative structures of images and talks about different layers of illustration which are formed by the syntagmatic and tension relation among them. Consequently, there is a syntactic pattern which makes semantic signs dynamic and increscent. Accordingly, this article aims to study the value

of different layers of an image dependent on the form of the expression and it is manifested through the subject matter of this expression which can be studied considering physical level of expression. If we accept that 'discourse means using language through individual action' (Benveniste, 1970), the language of an image also shows the ability of its discourse-figure through performance and manifestation of language, and the individual presence of the illustrator as a creator is realized through a linguistic act about a specific issue and finally, the way of using of the language of an image should be considered as a dynamic search in collective illustrative cultural memory which happens and is formed through illustrator's pragmatism.

## **2. 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 which does not determine the certainty of meaning, but we confront with a signifier system and live and dynamic meanings are produced; meaning in act means that a signifier system which exists in discourse is moving, '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-forming which forms successively amid different images of meaning-maker images After looking at images on the opposite side of the text, it can be said that the act and the aim which the illustrator considers for each meaning-maker images such as moon, sun etc. is in a frame, referential world or a place in which meaning can refer us to it and 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 further step from the text. In this amid, simplifying images multiply the uncertainty of the meaning and even make the image disregard age class. This itself improves the competitive part of the illustrator in the world of illustration to higher levels of meaning-making.

In this part, we get into illustrative interactions; in the issue of language of image and interaction, the important fact is that the relation between eyes and the mind of human and language of images is dynamic and mutual. In other words, the extent to which language of images has a bearing on human beings, human beings also equally have a bearing on images. It means that language of images aims to explain an issue or narrative. On the same line, language of images through iconic signs in illustration is itself a tool which could be used to express issues of internal and external world. For example, in all frames, the spatial feature of images puts the addressee in a poetic discourse relation; for example, on the one hand, the distance between sun and moon in the image one and even the shape of earth which is illustrated as such with strange curve point to features of them and on the other hand, they show human beings' inferiority and lowliness for 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 designing leads to capabilities in innovating convergent forms and general atmosphere; the visual context has the capability of changing from one form to another i.e. we see a convergent wholeness in the illustration of this book. Consequently, the distance between us and the iconic signs is made and the capability of our sensory-perceptive sensitiveness towards these signs is intellectually defined and the illustrative designer uses human beings' personality to show 'God', indeed the sign of 'God', through the strongest presence, a presence which is infinitely near to the viewer and its distance is the least one to him or her and it is tangible in such a way that it points out that 'the human' is a small sample of God (something like a grandfather). The illustrator in his design uses the meaning of the word 'nothing' the most, as it is said in the text (a day when there was nothing), when he describes the setting. The illustrator, in fact, instead of showing the word 'nothing', illustrates the human and God like humanicons who sit on a stool. When the addressee sees iconic signs, he or she spontaneously reacts to it, to God who is sitting on a stool and a small ellipse is suspended above his head. God disguised in a human's features is pondering with closed eyes and the light yellow ellipse signals that God is thinking. And simultaneously, God is on the opposite side of the human who looks at God with completely open eyes. The illustrator may aim to show that the human is dependent on God in any way and God is visible but not for everyone. (image 2) In this image, there is no ambiguity to receive signs and the illustrator's decision of the relation between the text and the image to show the beginning of the world is sufficient to the extent that he images 'nothingness' as simply as possible. He even has not drawn a line to show earth and the background and simultaneously, the addressee does not feel any suspension in the image. One of the most important elements of visual situations in whole atmosphere of the work is the solidness of the expressional form achieved through location, dimension and tendency of characters, blessings, things and animals in the all parts of the book. The meaningful shape relation of each element and each one's superiority, considering Elbruch's illustrative discourse value, finds its facial representation. Knowing unlike situations, using uncertainty in the image and considering location for each element, he provides the possibility of cognizing and searching about each phenomenon in the image. Cognizing line and the value of line which is the most important thing in designing, he puts 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 relation between the form of the expression or signifier and the form of the content or signified with a certain power between the sign and its external reference in illustration. If we take a look at the images from the point of view of Greimasian sign-semantics (Shairi, 1992) in which 'being', 'ontology' and 'human situations' are discussed, it seems that because in this book, the best way was chosen by the illustrator, the concept of God is dependent on existential or internal sign deficiency, it means relation with the sign; because of inaccessibility to internality and or real existence of the sign, nothing can be more achieved except its appearance. The illustrator uses the grandfather's image and an old and wise human to show the concept of God to the addressee. In doing so, returning to the principle of the sensory-perceptive sign, he approaches the existential dimension of sign-meanings. Using Husserl's phenomenal design (Lyotard, 1994) which returns to the origin of things, instead of reality, he nears the manifestation of reality or a representation of reality in order to create believability of the images which can produce relation and interaction in 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. But it should express the aim of the book on the specific level and it is also important that the way through which the illustrator impacts the reality, especially the natural world and sensory-perceptive world, to produce meanings.

### 2-4. Determinism in Illustrative Discourse

It is common that there are always subjects which 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; function, perception and developing relation between two sides entail recognizing the structure of language, visual narrative modes and also, recognizing semantic level, codes, relation between signs, medium, audience analysis and many other components.

Discourse universe is also a complex one which creates new situations through minor changes and it should be mentioned that the created relation is not restricted to the act of the illustrator and the addressee. But it can be affected by the textual determinism and linguistic determinism. This illustrative discourse determinism is defined as directionality of speech, 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, as the descriptions of the visual texts which we read on writing to direct our views; such as an image which we can have about 'God', or sun and a general situation of narration which shows the first days of the creation of the world and human beings.

## 2-5. Purenness and Meaning in Illustrative Discourse

Science of imagination is the same as science of visual sights. It is a science of mirror-like level and suspended images. This science as a science of watching credits the emergence-like nature of suspended samples amid existence and nothingness. Images shown on the mirror have phenomenal existence and here, we descry the necessity of images world; It 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 matter of tender body ,needs a dimension of phenomenon which is the same as the existential dimension of vision of suspended image on the mirror and the suspended image is not physical and it is not merely spiritual, but it is something amid them. It means that the image enjoys 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 purgatory world and it is as secret of worlds, it plays as an intermedator for these worlds in order to these worlds come to existence. Meanwhile the world of imagination is a 'phenomenal' place for spiritual beings(Corbin,1394).

This kind of visualization which is made by outline and colorful papers as collage somehow reminds pureness in the importance of illustrative discourse which is not completely abstract and completely objective.

But it is a common level between the external (objective signifier) and internal (subjective signified) level of the sign. Because God and the human have been made out of the same matter and they both have the same color. God's only different components are its bigger size and its beard. On the opposite site, the human is small and he is putting on 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 to this world and he abstains from any clothes and make-up; this seems to be a discourse value in illustration, which firstly easily distinguishes expressional or formal level from content level in illustrative work and secondly it firms the relation between the units of each level. Hence, in such a system which the illustrator defined, the relation between the form of expression and the form of content is so deep. Accordingly, the discourse value of the illustration is contextual-existential, sensory-perceptive, pragmatic, flowing, subjective and dynamic. Signs makes codes successively and with strong rhythm and make a new appearance. For example, in a frame, the power of 'God' is shown by the change of 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 stretch of hands makes the output of the discourse-sign-semantics react subject to innovation and a new look; semantic units have come into existence and become under the control of a novel system of discourse processing. (image3)



Image 3/ creation book/ Elbruch

## 3. Conclusion

Illustration has turned into the discourse language by practicing Erlbruch's individual language. On the same line, language function and emergence has 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 has a high level of interaction with the addressee. In this piece, the interaction between the superficial plan and content, active and meaning-making presence of the discourse processor and the speaker has been of significance to produce meaning. The illustrator believes that the meaning of a visual text not only depends on the subject 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 mind in order to narrate the text and display the image world of the illustrator. However, ambiguity of the meaning has doubled the impacts of addressee's interaction in this poetic work even the 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 are making all the attempts 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 some capabilities in creating convergent forms and a change in one image can change the codified system, and the relation between discourse, sign and meaning can result in a new perspective.

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