A Multimodal Analysis of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* within the Interpersonal Metafunction

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This study attempts to carry out an analysis of the interpersonal meanings conveyed by the verbal and the visual modes of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit,* while exploring the choices afforded to Beatrix Potter in creating engagement between the viewer / reader and the (represented) participants of the tale. The analytical tools employed in this study are Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics, which prove to be powerful models for the study of multimodal texts. The analysis of the interpersonal / interactive meaning of the verbal and visual elements in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* reveals that both the verbiage and the illustrations combine to reinforce the reader's / viewer's identification with the main character in the story. The high presence of declarative clauses throughout the text demonstrates that the verbal component accompanying the pictures does not seem to encourage much interaction. However, other devices related to contact, distance and perspective reveal that the illustrator makes choices which do create a certain degree of affinity with the viewer.

Keywords: SFL; Visual Social Semiotics; Multimodality; Visual/Verbal Modes; Interpersonal; Interactive

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Un análisis multimodal de El cuento de Peter Rabbit *desde una perspectiva interpersonal*

El objetivo de este artículo es realizar un análisis del significado interpersonal expresado por los modos verbal y visual utilizados en El Cuento de Peter Rabbit, *escrito e ilustrado por Beatriz Potter. Los marcos teóricos en los que se basa la investigación son la Gramática Sistémico-Funcional de Hallliday y la Semiótica Visual de Kress y van Leeuwen. El análisis demuestra que, aunque la imagen y la palabra escrita se combinan en perfecta simbiosis para favorecer la interacción entre los personajes de ficción y el niño, las imágenes, gracias a las técnicas de perspectiva y distancia utilizadas, logran un mayor grado de contacto interpersonal e identificación entre el joven lector y los personajes del cuento que la lengua escrita.*

Palabras clave: Gramática Sistémico-Funcional; Semiótica Visual; Multimodalidad; Modos Verbal y Visual; Interpersonal; Interactivo

1. Aims and scope of the study

The aim of this paper is to carry out an intersemiotic analysis of the interpersonal meanings conveyed by the verbal and the visual components of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, focusing on the relations of engagement, power and intimacy established between the illustrator/writer, the viewer/reader, and the (represented) participants involved in the picture book.[1] The tale was first written by Beatrix Potter as a letter to a five year old child, Noel Moore, the first son of Beatrix's governess, Annie Carter, and later converted into a book. Ever since its first publication in 1902, the tale has remained in print in order to satisfy children's and adults' demands (Taylor 1987). The plot is simple: Peter disobeys his mother and trespasses in Mr McGregor's garden, where he greedily enjoys a feast of vegetables until he feels sick. He is almost caught by the owner and runs the risk of meeting the same fate as his father who ended up in a pie after being trapped within the confines of the same property. After several difficult encounters, he manages to escape from the garden and comes back home. There, his mother gives him a dose of camomile tea to relieve his pain while his sisters, Flopsy, Mopsy and Cotton-tail, have bread, milk and blackberries for supper.

The tale was intended for children of the English middle class in the Victorian era, characterized by strict and conservative manners in court and in children's education. In line with the moralising literature addressed to children that Potter was familiar with, the author, who also doubles as illustrator, no doubt followed the ideological requirements of the Victorian period. And, indeed, some moralistic values predominate in the verbal narrative: the good little bunnies, as Potter calls them, are rewarded at the end of the tale with a nice supper while Peter, after disobeying his mother, ends up with a stomach-ache. Notwithstanding her decision to punish Peter for his disobedience, Potter, as Scott (2001) states, seems to be on the side of the transgressor:

> Although Peter disobeys his mother and causes her anxiety and grief, commits trespass and theft, and evades paternalistic authority symbolized by Mr. McGregor …, nonetheless he escapes all punishment for his misdeeds, except for a temporary stomach-ache resulting from his greediness. (2001: 20)

The tale seems to be more than a story in which a character has found himself in a risky situation by disobeying his mother's advice. As has been observed in the critical literature, Potter's voice seems to be that of a rebel in defence of liberty and natural instinct (Scott 2001: 29; Carpenter 1989: 279). This ambiguity around Potter's stance towards the protagonist is a constant in the story, and I propose that this will probably determine the semiotic choices made by the writer-illustrator to create interpersonal meanings in both the verbal and visual modes.

The current study offers an innovative aspect in relation to previous analyses on picture books. These children's stories have been analysed primarily from a literary perspective according to their themes (Feaver 1977) and also in connection with cognitive development (Spitz 1999; Moya and Ávila 2009). However, in these analyses, the intersemiosis between verbal and visual aspects has been neglected. Indeed, only a few researchers, among them Moebius (1986), Nikolajeva and Scott (2000), Lewis (2006) and Painter (2007), have studied the mapping of language against illustrations in this genre. In an attempt to delve into the intersemiosis of images and words in picture books, I will try to examine how images and words complement each other in Potter's tale in order to forge the identification between the main character and the child reader.

The analysis to be carried out is essentially multimodal, as it focuses on the use and combination of several semiotic modes within a socio-cultural domain (Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). In the past, representational, interpersonal and textual meanings, as developed in Halliday's account (2004), tended to be organised through the traditional modes of speaking and writing. However, nowadays, both written and visual components are considered to be crucial tools in our society for the construction of meaning (Baldry and Thibault 2006; Ventola and Moya 2009). This is the case in picture books, where words and images reinforce each other without necessarily offering the same information; good picture books are a richer experience than the simple sum of their independent components (Nodelman 1988; Moya and Pinar 2008).

The analytical tools employed in this study are Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (2004) (henceforth SFG) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics (2006), as they complement each other and are powerful models for the study of multimodal texts. SFL approaches texts as communicative interactions in cultural and situational contexts and assumes that language expresses three types of meanings: representing our experience of the world inside and around us (ideational), enacting social relationships (interpersonal) and finally, creating coherent wholes of communication (textual). But the reality of the world is not only conceptualized through language. Aware of this fact, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) expand on the SFG model to account for other types of semiotic meanings than those encoded by language and create a descriptive framework of multimodality by assigning representational, interactive and compositional meanings to images.

Once the objectives and scope of this study are presented, in an attempt to delimit the theoretical background, reference will be made to the aspects related to Halliday's interpersonal metafunction and the interactive features of Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar. With the methodology outlined, I will proceed to the analysis of the semiotic choices made by Potter in the verbal and the visual components of the tale in order to transmit the desired message to the reader. Finally, the results will be expounded based on findings from the thirty-two double spreads contained in the tale, in which verbal and visual elements are intertwined in the verso and the recto of the pages that make up the story. All the images, however, cannot be inserted into the present contribution. Those that have been included will be referred to as figures 1 and 2. The edition used in this study is the original authorized version of *Beatrix Potter. The Complete Tales*, revised and published in 2002.

2. Theoretical Background: Interpersonal and interactive meanings

Language is not simply content that reflects and organizes our experience of reality through the systems of TRANSITIVITY and THEME. Language is also used to encode interaction with others. The interpersonal metafunction is basically concerned with enacting social relationships between the speaker and the hearer in a specific context of communication, and deals with the clause as an exchange of information and as a exchange of goods and services (Halliday 2004).

Within the SFG account, at the lexico-grammatical stratum, interpersonal meaning includes, along with the expression of opinion and attitude, the mood of the clause, expressed in English by the presence/absence and ordering of subject and finite verb. In addition, in the semantics, interpersonal meaning includes the type of speech act chosen (statement, offer, question and directive), realized by grammatical options and encoded by means of three syntactic moods (declarative, interrogative and imperative). As shown in table 1, the system of MOOD organizes the clause as an interactive event in which the speaker adopts a speech role, essentially (i) giving or demanding information (by means of statements and questions) or (ii) exchanging goods and services (be the commodity an offer or a command), and assigns a complementary role to the listener which he wishes him to adopt (Halliday 2004).

Commodity exchanged > and **Role in exchange** ∨	**INFORMATION**	**GOODS AND SERVICES**
GIVING	Statement Declarative mood	Offer Various realizations
DEMANDING	Question Interrogative mood	Command Imperative mood

Table 1. Speech Functions and their Congruent Realizations

Thus, in the verbal mode, writers address their readers by making statements, asking questions, making offers or requiring some kind of action of them. Similarly, in the visual mode, producers also use visual acts which are parallel with speech functions. Among the visual choices available to analyse interpersonal meaning are the absence or presence of facial expressions towards the viewer, gestures which make commands, and offers of information or offers of goods and services to the viewer. The interactive function, (also called the engagement or modal function in O'Toole's terms [1999]), is reflected in the way images attract the viewer's attention and is concerned with the type of relationship established between three types of participants: (i) the producers of the image, the artists and designers, who do something to or for their readers through their designs, (ii) the readers of the image, who interpret the message created by the image makers and are also drawn into a relationship with the Represented Participants

(henceforth RPs), and finally (iii) the RPs, which may be related to one another through vectors of motion or eyelines (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

As shown in table 2, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) distinguish three types of systems associated with the interpersonal function, those of (i) image act and gaze, (ii) social distance and intimacy, and (iii) involvement and power. The three systems work interpersonally, as they show the way in which what is represented in a visual composition interacts with the viewer (Matthiessen 2007: 20). The system of image act and gaze differentiates between images in which something is required of the reader through visual contact (demands), searching for some kind of engagement, and images that solely present information (offers), lacking eye-contact vectors between the viewer and the characters depicted. Those visuals which present information do not require the viewer to react to anything nor do they demand of him to carry out a particular action or adopt any specific behaviour; they simply offer information that can be either acknowledged or contradicted. In offers, the RP becomes an object of contemplation and presents itself for inspection to an observer without being involved in a quasi-personal relationship. However, in demand images, the RP looks directly at the viewer, requiring and establishing a strong engagement with him (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

Meaning Systems	Means of Realization
I. Image act and Gaze	Offer and demand
II. Social Distance and Intimacy	Close-ups, middle-shots and long-shots
III.a Horizontal Angle and Involvement	Frontal and oblique angles
III.b Vertical Angle and Power	High, low and eye-level angles

Table 2. Interactive Function in Images. Basic Features

In addition to the choices related to image act and gaze, interactive relationships are also defined on the basis of social distance and attitude (involvement and power). The system of social distance relates to the degree of intimacy established between the viewer and the RPs depicted in a composition, determined by how close they appear to the viewer in an image. The scale, resulting in feelings of intimacy or distance, varies between close-up shots, which create intimacy between reader and the RP, as the image is in close proximity to the viewer, and long-shots, which express distance, and an intermediate level of intimacy realized by medium-shots. While in long shots participants are portrayed full length and, "there is an invisible barrier between the viewer and the object", in close-ups "the object is shown as if the viewer is engaged with it. Unless the object is very small, it is shown only in part"; sometimes only the head and shoulders or even the face are made visible. In turn, in middle shots, "the object is shown in full but without much space around it. It is represented as within the viewer's reach" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 127-28).

Finally, the choices of attitude are established by perspective techniques, that is, by the way the viewer and the RPs are positioned in relation to the vertical and horizontal planes. The choice of a particular point of view greatly affects the way we understand the situation depicted. While the horizontal angle determines our emotional involvement with the RPs (frontal angle), or detachment (oblique angle) from them, the vertical angle reflects relationships of power and vulnerability, depending on whether the RPs are looked at from a low or a high angle respectively. The vertical angle transmits two types of power relationships, that between the RPs and the viewer, and that between the RPs within an image (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). We can be positioned from a high, low or eye-level angle. When the point of view is arranged upwards or downwards along a vertical axis, an increase or a diminution of power over the RPs can be experienced: the viewer has power over the RP if it is projected from a high angle. However, the RP has power over the viewer if seen from a low angle. Finally, RPs aligned at eye level angles have equal power status with their viewers (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

Another factor to be considered in the visual mode is that of character focalization, which analyzes the eyes through which the narrative world is seen. The reader/viewer can contemplate the actions or thoughts of the characters that make up the narration vicariously through the point of view of a character, be it main or secondary, and not through his own eyes (Moebius 1986; Painter 2007). In children's stories, this is achieved, Painter affirms (2007: 44-45), through the utilization of distinct techniques which can be applied either to images juxtaposed in two scenes (across frames) or in one picture (within a frame). Sometimes, the utilization of only one image offers the possibility of simultaneously having a reader's perspective and a character focalization. This technique is known as, "viewing along with the focalizing character" (Painter 2007: 47-48). In it, the reader is usually positioned behind the character and sees what is happening within the narrated world through both his own eyes and the character's eyes. Double spread 11, when Peter meets Mr McGregor for the first time in his garden after having had a feast of vegetables, provides a good example, as we also see the farmer from Peter's viewpoint, and at the same time, the protagonist has his back toward the observer.

The interpersonal function not only includes interaction, but also implies evaluative meaning. In language, evaluative meaning is realized through the system of polarity (positive and negative) and essentially through the system of modality, which reflects the speaker's or writer's stance towards the content of communication, and introduces elements of doubt (degrees of certainty and probability and degrees of usuality and frequency). As in language, visual images also possess degrees of modality ranging from high to low levels of credibility. In the case of naturalistic modality,[2] the more an image

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[2] Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) differentiate between four coding orientations of visual modality: naturalistic modality, scientific modality, abstract modality and sensory modality. Nowadays, naturalism is the leading standard by which visual realism is determined. The resemblance of an image to the objects or participants it represents in the real world is, in turn, defined by eight different modality markers which help us to describe different degrees of accuracy or abstraction in images: colour saturation, colour modulation and colour

resembles whatever it is in the real world in a specific setting, the higher degree of modality it is likely to have (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Thus, in general terms, a photograph of an object obviously has higher modality than just a sketch of it, as the first is more lifelike (Lewis 2006). However, the modality of an image is not only established in terms of its resemblance to reality; it is also motivated by the cultural standards of what is real and unreal within a specific social group (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 160-63).

3. Analysis of interpersonal relationships in the verbiage and the illustrations

So far the tools available to analyse the meaning transmitted by the verbal and non-verbal modes in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* have been referred to. The interaction in picture books is realized by the necessary presence of three participants: the represented characters depicted in the illustrations or referred to verbally, the writer and illustrator of the tale and the receivers, either viewers or readers. Firstly, the mood structures used by the writer to transmit interpersonal meaning to the reader will be analysed. Next, the relations of contact, distance and attitude will be dealt with within the visual component and compared with the information that the verbiage offers regarding interpersonal features. The quantitative data obtained will finally be interpreted from a qualitative and functional perspective.

3.1. Interpersonal options in the verbiage

Within the SFG framework, only independent clauses are capable of distinguishing mood (Halliday 2004: 135, figure 4-15). This implies that major, free clauses can have a mood-residue structure and, in turn, can be established as either declarative, interrogative or imperative. However, the non-finite clauses, relative clauses, *that*-clauses, conditional and other subordinate clauses of time and cause that the story contains do not select for these mood types as distinguished by Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar.

   As can be seen in table 3, most clauses are declarative throughout and cover 95% of the cases counted. Thus, in the verbiage there is little that is of stylistic importance which is interpersonal and signalled through the grammar, since declarative mood structures do not encourage much engagement. The explanation for this lies in the fact that, while the utilization of imperative and interrogative modes tends to interrupt the thread of the story, declaratives generally contribute directly to the continuity of the plot. Declaratives act as statements at the discourse-semantic level. Through them, Potter represents the narrative world, from the first stage, when Peter is forbidden by his mother to enter Mr McGregor's garden, until the end, when he manages to escape from the farmer. The resolution of the conflict is produced in double spread 27, when

Peter manages to escape from the garden and finds the way back home. In this double spread, Peter is almost under the gate, but not quite; he is just about to slip underneath it. This establishes a rhythmic pattern between words and pictures, since the action shown by the pictures comes at some point before the completion of the action described by the declarative clauses used in the text. In this way, we read the text in some anticipation and the illustration delays the events, therefore increasing the narrative tension. As Nodelman (1988: 258) affirms, almost every picture in this tale shows a moment towards the end of the actions implied by the text, but not necessarily the very end. This aspect will be referred to again in the analysis of the illustrations.

Mood Structures	Absolute Values	Values in Percentages
Declarative	94	95 %
Imperative	4	4 %
Interrogative	1	1 %
Total number	99	100%

Table 3. Mood structures in 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'

Out of the 94 declarative clauses identified, 4 act, at the discourse level, as exclamations. Indicated as such by an exclamation mark, they are signals to adults reading aloud to children that Potter is highlighting key passages in the narrative plot that make the story progress. In double spread 8, for example, through an exclamation "And squeezed under the gate!" the conflict starts. Peter disobeys his mother's instructions and begins his adventure in the McGregors' private garden, where his father had lost his life upon becoming trapped by the farmer. After enjoying the feast of vegetables, the inevitable happens: the protagonist and the aggressor cross paths, an event that Potter expresses through the only interrogative structure identified in the tale: " But round the end of a cucumber frame, whom should he meet but Mr. McGregor!" (double spread 11). In fact, rather than a regular interrogative, this idiomatic structure containing a *wh*-element, *should* and *but* is used to express surprise and is signalled as an exclamation by means of punctuation. Again, Potter uses the mood structures punctuation to achieve special effects at the discourse-semantic level.

There is another exclamation worthy of mention which refers to Peter's loss of garments: " … It was the second little jacket and pair of shoes that Peter had lost in a fortnight!" (double spread 30). At first glance, this event does not seem to be relevant to the development of the narrative plot; rather, it is an anecdote within the deeds that the protagonist has had to overcome in order to return home safe and sound. However, the author gives this act some special importance by using an exclamation mark. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Peter's garments are a metaphor of the social repression of natural impulses. For Potter, clothing is synonymous with imprisonment and hostility to freedom (Scott 1994: 79). Notice that in Potter's time, the Victorian Period, women wore corsets, which were very uncomfortable and even resulted in fainting at times. Women wore them, however, because if not, it created social disapproval. Peter seems to be torn between his rabbit-like nature and his child-like behaviour. His entrance into the garden, which is private property, also involves the loss of his clothing. By using

clothing as a motive, Potter creates the dilemma of whether Peter should act like a child, as his mother wishes, following the civilized codes of behaviour, or naturally, like an animal, following his animal instincts (Scott 1994).

Only four commands, realized through imperative clauses, have been found in double spreads 2, 4 and 12, which reach the rate of 4% of the tokens identified. They are of special interest to us here, as they create an interactive relationship between the main character, Peter, and his mother, and between him and Mr McGregor: "but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden", "Now run along", "and don't get into mischief", "stop thief!" These commands are not usually heeded by the protagonist. Peter trespasses in the garden, not because he needs food to survive, since that is provided by his mother, but rather for the pure joy of breaking established rules (Scott 2001). Thus, so far, it seems that the narrative voice reflects the events from an objective and distant perspective, as suggested by the sparse use of imperative and interrogative clauses and the high presence of declarative mood structures. The attitudes and judgments embodied in the text, realised by the system of modal assessment and by choice of lexis, are also part of the interpersonal metafunction of language (Halliday 2004: table 10 [6]). Attitudinal lexis within nominal group and copular structures is also used by Potter to express evaluative meaning and to establish a boundary between the protagonist's and his sisters' behaviour. Within a lexico-grammatical framework, Peter's sisters are described as "good little rabbits" while Peter is typically associated with the qualities "naughty" and "frightened". Concerning modality, in the second double spread the modal verb *may* expresses permission given by the person in authority, Mrs Rabbit: "you may go into the fields or down the lane", after which a prohibition is introduced, which restricts the protagonist's freedom. In the 23th double spread the modal verb *could* refers to the mouse's lack of ability to give information about the location of the gate that leads to the exit of the McGregor's property ("... but she [an old mouse] had such a large pea in her mouth that she could not answer"). The most relevant expressions from a modal perspective are found in double spread 15:

> After losing them (his clothes), he ran on four legs and went faster, so that I think he might have got away altogether if he had not unfortunately run into a gooseberry net, and got caught by the large buttons on his jacket. It was a blue jacket with brass buttons, quite new. (2002: 13)

The interpersonal metaphor *I think*,[3] the modal verb *might*, expressing factual possibility, and essentially the modal adjunct *unfortunately*, show Potter's stance in favour of Peter. The fact that the little rabbit runs into a gooseberry net where he was trapped is described by the writer as unfortunate. In this specific case, Potter seems to support the flight of the protagonist, placing the reader of the tale on his side. Following

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3 Speech functions such as statement, command and question have both congruent and metaphorical realizations. With metaphorical realizations, the grammar works as a metaphor – as when an interrogative like *Could you open the window?* is used to make a request. One kind of interpersonal metaphor involves a first person present tense and a mental process of cognition such as *I think*. Here, the modal adjunct of probability is construed through the grammar as a clause in which the speaker is made responsible for the assessment (Halliday 2004). For further information about the concept of grammatical metaphor, see Halliday 2004: 592-93 and 634-36.

this line, the author leads the reader to identify with the defenceless rabbit and to wish for his escape from his oppressor. This clearly seems to be in opposition of the Victorian philosophy where children were supposed to be punished if they did not follow the rules imposed by their elders. Mackey (1998) and Scott (2001) support this and state that the tone used by Potter to describe the protagonist's disobedience raises the question of whether she is on the side of conventionalism or on the side of freedom and natural instinct.

3.2. Interactive choices in the illustrations

At this point, I shall attempt to determine how the visual elements create interpersonal meanings throughout the tale, by focussing the analysis on the interactive features that Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) distinguish in their Grammar of Visual Design: (i) image, act and gaze; (ii) social distance and intimacy, (iii) horizontal angle and involvement and, finally, (iv) vertical angle and power, with their respective classifications. The aim is to find out whether the illustrations suggest relations of intimacy or whether they imply a certain level of detachment, similar to that achieved by the high utilization of declarative clauses with scarce modality markers in the verbal component. The analysis of the thirty-two illustrations, shown in table 4, sheds light on the visual techniques used by Potter to create engagement and possibly forge the identification of the young child with Peter. The aspects offer, long shots, frontal and eye-level angles predominate in the majority of the illustrations, with certain exceptions that will be commented on later.

Image act and Gaze	Social Distance and Intimacy	Horizontal angle and Involvement	Vertical Angle and Power
Offer ------------------- 30 tokens /93.7 %	Close-ups ----------------- 6 tokens / 18.8%	Frontal ------------------- 26 tokens / 81.2%	High ----------------- 6 tokens / 18.7 %
Demand ------------------- 2 tokens / 6.3%	Middle-shots ----------------- 5 tokens / 15.6 %	Oblique ------------------- 6 tokens / 18.8 %	Eye-level ----------------- 26 tokens / 81.3 %
	Long-shots ---------------- 21 tokens / 65.6%		Low ---------------- 0 tokens / 0 %
TOTAL 32 tokens /100%	TOTAL 32 tokens /100%	TOTAL 32 tokens /100%	TOTAL 32 tokens /100%

Table 4. Interactive Features. Absolute and Relative Values

Concerning Image act and Gaze, the analysis shows that there is a predominance of offers (93.7%) over demand images, which count for only 6.3% of the analysed cases. Through offers, the RPs are presented as items of information for the child, but without

creating affinity with him. They simply reflect the sequence of actions carried out by the main characters of the story, as shown in double spreads 7 and 8, when Peter is running straight for Mr McGregor's garden and squeezes under the gate. Sometimes the RPs continually look at each other, crossing their gazes, as happens in double spread 11, where visual contact is established between Peter and Mr McGregor on their first encounter while the farmer is planting cabbages. On other occasions, the RP looks somewhere within the image or is just walking without looking at a specific point, as when Peter feels sick after eating some lettuce, radishes and French beans and looks for some parsley to alleviate his pain. In these cases, there is no eye contact established with the viewer and, consequently, there is no demand on the child to be involved in any way beyond accepting or rejecting the offers of information made by the illustrator.

However, two demand images have been identified in double spreads 1 and 21, fulfilling two narrative purposes respectively: (i) introduce the characters to the reader, and (ii) encourage our empathy with the main character. In the first place, inserted here as figure 1, the rabbits are located near the tree trunk where they live. Mrs Rabbit, the mother of the litter, directs her gaze directly at the viewer, inviting him into the story and introducing her children as the verbiage also does through a *there*-construction: "ONCE UPON A TIME there were four little Rabbits, and their names were –Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail and Peter". In this scene, although both the verbiage and the illustration are essential to the creation of the story, the illustration conveys more relevant information about Peter's personality than do the words. Peter is represented through a visual metonymy (Forceville 2009), one part (his tail) for his whole, attracting the reader's attention in a special way. The picture, which is a long-shot and has frontal and eye-level angles, clearly reflects that Flopsy, Mopsy and Cotton-tail do not share the same personality as the main character. While his sisters show their heads to the reader, Peter is playing in the burrow and only his backside can be seen. He is absorbed in his own world and reveals a different attitude. Without the help of the verbiage, we possibly would not know that there are four rabbits in the story, as only the heads of three little rabbits are being depicted.[4]

The second demand image is identified in double spread 21. Peter looks directly at the recipient of the story looking for support and demonstrating a certain sadness in his eyes at having left the watering can in which he hid to escape from Mr McGregor. In picture books this type of reaction image is not common as their use usually interrupts the development of the narrative plot. The text that accompanies it essentially describes the state in which the protagonist finds himself, without contributing to the plot development. This demand image achieves a strong engagement between Peter and the child, and forges the identification of the latter with the hero of the story.

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[4] Note that in the verbal component the names of the four little rabbits are displaced towards the left from Flopsy to Peter, so that the viewer can easily identify Peter with the rabbit whose rear end is seen in the illustration, represented through a metonymy.
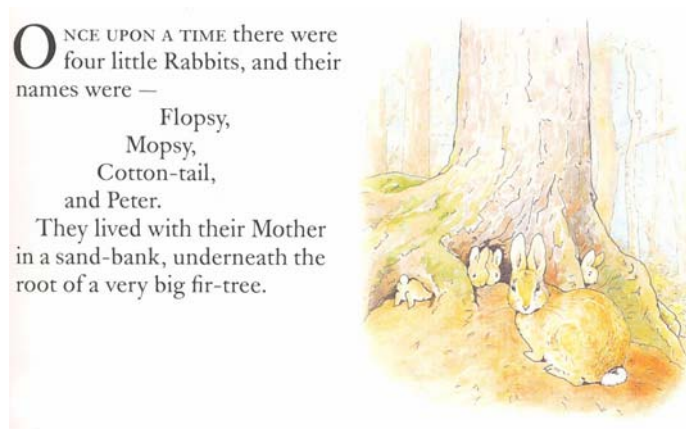
Figure 1. Peter's family

With regard to the second feature of interactive meaning, social distance and intimacy, long shots predominate as characters are shown full-length and surrounded by a setting, although they are not necessarily located in the far distance. The 21 long-shots identified tend to show characters against the background in which the actions are carried out, generally within the natural exterior settings of the protagonists (see figure 1). Some of the long-shots, however, reflect interior settings: the tool-shed where Peter tries to hide after his first encounter with the farmer or even the Rabbit family's house in the final three illustrations where kitchen utensils, the main character's bed and food can be seen. The exterior settings, as Scott (2001) states, usually provide a high degree of contextual detail as evidenced in double spreads 26 and 27, where Peter is looking from the wheelbarrow towards the gate and later escaping from Mr McGregor; these two illustrations offer long-shots with the main character, Peter, in the foreground.

Out of thirty-two plates, there are also five middle-distance shots and six close-ups. Double spread 20, included here as figure 2, provides a good example of a middle shot with an oblique angle. In it, Mr McGregor's booted foot is about to step on Peter before he manages to escape from the tool shed by jumping out of a small window. To be more exact, I would say that the distance in this illustration is between middle and close. The viewer can see the flower petals falling off the geranium, also the tufts of hair on the rabbit and even the studs on the sole of Mr McGregor's boots. This image may also suggest that we are looking from the physical perspective of a small child. Thus, as readers, we can assume that we are in the position of one of the Represented Participants, probably Peter, who is in danger. This, of course, reinforces the identification of the young child with the protagonist in the story.

Finally, although close-ups are usually infrequent in picture books (Nodelman 1988), the six identified in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* generate involvement with the main character by showing the child reader his facial expressions and, presumably, communicate the way he feels. The great presence of long-shots (65.6%) gives the tale a sense of objectivity and distance from the reader (Nodelman 1988: 151; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). However, middle-shots and close-ups suggest involvement between the

RPs depicted in the tale and the viewer. In addition, there are also long-shots which show the characters with a certain proximity to the viewer and create interaction between the characters, their surroundings and the young child. This is the case of the first double spread (see figure 1), when Peter's family is introduced to the reader. Although the figure is a long-shot, Mrs Rabbit's direct gaze towards the child may suggest an invitation to enter into the rabbits' lives and their adventures.[5]

And tried to put his foot upon Peter, who jumped out of a window, upsetting three plants. The window was too small for Mr. McGregor, and he was tired of running after Peter. He went back to his work.
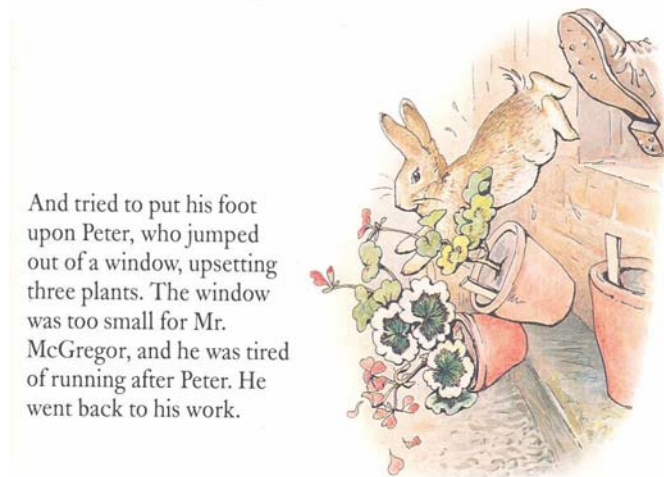
Figure 2. Escaping from the tool shed

As for the third feature of interactive meaning, horizontal angle and involvement, most of the angles identified in the thirty-two illustrations of the tale are frontal (81.2% of the tokens counted). Figure 1 provides a good example. Oblique angles, like the one offered in figure 2, however, total only 18.8% of the cases identified. Unlike oblique angles, which show the participants from the sidelines and create a sense of detachment (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 134), frontal angles generate involvement with the child-reader, as in them the viewer stands facing the Represented Participants so that their facial expressions, or at least their eyes, are gazing at him. As evidenced in the last three illustrations (30-32), the Rabbit family is shown from a frontal perspective and the observer can contemplate them in the privacy of their daily household lives: cooking, resting in bed or dining. Here, as in figure 1, the plane of the represented objects and the plane of the illustrator run parallel (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 134). However, in figure 2, the subjects of the illustration (Peter and Mr McGregor's boot) are not situated in front of the viewer, but shown from the side lines. They are marginal, at 90 degrees, which makes this illustration an oblique angle (Kress, personal communication).

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[5] A possible reason why picture books have more long-shots than middle-shots and close-ups may be genre related. In a long-shot there is more for the child to see, which is an important tool for interaction between the mediator (reading parent, teacher, grandparents…) and the child who is following the story. Questions like *Where is Peter in the picture?* or *What things do you see in Mr. McGregor's garden?*, prompt interaction between the young reader and the adult.

Finally, regarding vertical angle and power, the forth feature of interactive meaning, there is a predominance of eye-level angles (81.3%) over high angles, which total only 18.7% of the cases counted. In addition, no low angles have been identified. Most images are represented from an eye-level angle, which implies that the viewer is at the same level as the main characters, and therefore feels identified with them. Figure 1, already described, provides a good example. Most of the high angles identified usually show Peter in trouble lying on the ground, as when he is caught in the net and nearly gives up (double spreads 15-17). In this way, the author successfully manages to make the reader feel compassion for the distraught rabbit and to wish him not to be trapped by the farmer.

Perspective techniques also perform a fundamental role in the achievement of engagement and affinity between the RPs and the viewer. In double spread 11, for example, when Peter and Mr McGregor meet each other for the first time, Peter is focalized from the farmer's gaze. This way, the illustrator shows the superiority of the aggressor to the main character in the story. The viewer contemplates Peter's back and sees through his eyes or from a perspective close to him. The scene reveals the power of Mr McGregor, depicted as a big human being. In contrast, the rabbit is drawn as a small creature, with which the child can easily identify. Double spread 26 is also especially relevant from a focalizing point of view. While the verbiage presents the facts from the narrator's perspective, as the use of the third person pronoun *he* demonstrates, the visual component reflects the action carried out by the farmer in the garden through Peter's eyes. It is the first time, just before finding an exit, that the hero dominates the situation and contemplates the aggressor with a certain calmness:

> But presently, as nothing happened, he came out, and climbed upon a wheelbarrow, and peeped over. The first thing he saw was Mr. McGregor hoeing onions. His back was turned towards Peter, and beyond him was the gate! (2002: 18).

Most pictures allow the reader to observe Peter in the foreground from almost touching distance, a limited perspective that favours the observer's identification with the hero (Scott 2001: 22). This identification with the main character, forged from the illustrations, contrasts with the narrative voice adopted in the verbal text. For example, in the scene where Peter is trapped in the gooseberry net (double spread 15), the narrator's words emphasize the remoteness of the action, taking away narrative tension and energy, as the danger is not imminent:

> After losing them, he ran on four legs and went faster, so that I think he might have got away altogether if he had not unfortunately run into a gooseberry net, and got caught by the large buttons of his jacket.... (2002: 13)

However, the illustration accentuates the sense of entrapment and gives immediacy and actuality to the action described. Peter is lying, immobile, his gaze directed towards ground level, leading the viewer's gaze into the net. Potter masterfully manipulates the perspective, as well as the textual and visual focalization, and depicts the main character always in the foreground to mould the reader's perception and forge his or her identification with the protagonist (Scott 2001: 26-27).

Concerning modality, the tendency is to combine indicators of high and low modality, as is often the case in many picture books (Lewis 2006: 164). Potter shows us an animal protagonist, wonderfully illustrated. At the same time, she gives him qualities belonging to the human world, dressing him and bestowing on him the ability to speak and express feeling. Her illustrations are not photographs, but the main character's movements and postures are detailed and naturalistic, reflecting lifelike features and achieving a high level of modality, according to the visual perspective defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Given the mastery of Potter's illustrations, double spread 23, for example, offers a high level of modality. Peter is shown with his animal features but also reflecting his human-like nature. He adopts a human pose and expresses human feelings when he cries, poised at the door upon not being able to communicate with a mouse that was carrying a pea in her mouth. A tear can even be seen falling from his eye. The text and image combine in perfect harmony to bring the character closer to the reader. The entire scene communicates human feelings (Scott 1994), contradicting Nodelman's thesis. When comparing the communicative function of words with respect to the images, Nodelman indicates (1988: 173) that the accompanying text is essential in those cases in which the writer intends to transmit emotions. However, the mastery of Potter's illustrations, in part, comes from her ability to transmit not only actions but also feelings. Peter's human appearance and ability to show feelings clearly connects him with the viewer, as he has the same feelings and postures as a human being.

Other illustrations have a lower level of modality. Occasionally, the main characters are reflected in the illustrations through metonymy (Forceville 2009). In picture 19, for example, when Mr McGregor and Peter are in the shed, the metonymy, ears for Peter, puts the child reader in a position of dominance, as he or she knows more about what is going on than either Peter or Mr McGregor. The only party that does not know where the hero has hidden is the enemy, Mr McGregor. Despite Peter's disobedience, Potter's visual techniques bring the reader on the side of the defenceless rabbit.

4. Conclusion

The comparison of the verbal and visual choices made within the interpersonal metafunction in the multimodal text, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit,* reveals that both the verbiage and the illustrations combine to reinforce the identification of the reader/viewer with the main character in the story. However, the visual mode seems to contribute in large part to the creation of engagement between the RPs and the child.

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006: 163) concept of modality is, as the authors admit, more complex than simply its realization in language. According to their model, a diagram is understood as having low modality on the basis of its lack of realistic representation, but, in scientific contexts, it can also be considered as having high modality on account of its potentiality to represent content in a highly accurate manner. Indeed, the applications of the modality markers used by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to determine the credibility of a visual instance are not clear, and the categories they offer (colour modulation, colour differentiation, background

representation, detail representation, tonality, etc) are more a continuum between high and low modality than clear binary oppositions (Maching 2007: 180). In this sense, Forceville (1999: 168) points out that in addition Kress and van Leeuwen give little information about the way modality markers can be applied to different genres.

Regarding the tale at hand, the characters are depicted, not photographed; therefore, they are not lifelike. In theory, within a naturalistic code, this would imply that the illustrations would have a low level of modality. Nevertheless, Potter's mastery in drawing animals, especially rabbits, and their movements and postures gives her detailed illustrations a high level of realism. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 164) state that within the naturalistic criterion the degree of modality of an image is determined by its resemblance to reality and also by the culture and social group in which it is produced and is intended to be understood. In addition, there is another factor that deserves to be mentioned. The modality of images could also be affected by genre-related issues, as happens to be the case in picture books.

Illustrations in picture books such as *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* are true pieces of art, and reflect the objects depicted with a high level of resemblance to reality, especially if we consider that they are part of stories intended for children. Characters turn into real participants in the literary and imaginary world of the children for whom the tales are written and illustrated. When an image is observed, the viewer understands its meaning and what it represents through his knowledge of the genre conventions of representation, in this case the representational standards of children's picture books. Thus, genre conventions may also have a direct influence on what can be considered as real or unreal in a specific visual instance, and also on the way images are observed and interpreted by the viewer.

The above-mentioned lack of interaction is sometimes also reflected, to a certain extent, in the visual part, in correspondence with the declarative mood structures chosen by Potter, as there is a predominance of offers and long-shots. Most illustrations are offers since Peter and Mr McGregor keep looking at each other or at something within the image (a mouse, a white cat, …), without making any demand apart from acceptance or rejection of suggested information. In addition, the illustrations are mainly long shots, as the characters, except when they are depicted metonymically, are usually portrayed full length. According to Kress and van Leeuwen's approach (2006), this seems to imply objectivity, some social distance and not an intimate relationship.

Although the utilization of offers and long-shots may imply distance from the viewer, other devices related to contact, distance and perspective reveal that the illustrator makes choices which do create affinity with the viewer. The child reader usually looks at the pictures from a frontal viewpoint, which gives him the feeling of being involved in Peter's world. In contrast to the horizontal axis, which reflects involvement, the vertical angle usually expresses power (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 146-47). As the rabbits and Mr McGregor are seen neither from above nor below, there is no power difference established between them and the observer. Most images are represented from an eye-level angle, which implies that the child is at the same level as Peter and therefore feels identified with him. Finally, through high angles Peter can be contemplated from a position of superiority and the viewer becomes a part of the

difficulties the rabbit finds himself in and must save himself from, leading the child to feel compassion for the defenceless animal.

These features are reinforced by the use of close-ups and middle-shots, by the depiction of RPs in the foreground, relatively close to the viewer, and by the two demand images identified in the tale. Unlike offers of information, in demand images eye contact is established between the RPs and the viewer, creating involvement by direct gazing. The utilization of demand images shows the intention of the illustrator to establish a strong engagement between the hero and the viewer, above all if we take into account that this type of image is infrequent in picture books (Lewis 2006), as direct visual contact with the recipient of the tale can interrupt, albeit momentarily, the development of the narrative plot. Furthermore, the effect of detachment achieved by the utilization of long-shots is diminished by the use of focalization techniques. The actions that involve the greatest danger for the protagonist are presented through Peter's eyes, forging, in this way, identification between the hero and the reader.

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