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A multimodal analysis of Daddy's Roommate : deconstructing compositional and interpersonal meanings

A Multimodal Analysis of Daddy's Roommate: Deconstructing Interpersonal and Compositional Meanings

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Abstract

This paper employs the model to analyse visual narratives in children's picturebooks proposed by Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013) and Kress and van Leeuwen's visual social semiotics (2006), in order to observe the main compositional and interpersonal meanings created in the picturebook *Daddy's Roommate.* The aim of the study is to look at the position of the readers in the story and to observe the way the characters are represented and the relationships between them. The role of the mother will also be deconstructed, due to her importance in the story. I will analyse the main characteristics of the interpersonal and compositional metafunctions by exploring the way in which the visual and textual component create meaning. The methodology is mainly qualitative-descriptive.

The analysis reveals that the abundance of middle-shots and close-ups suggest involvement between the characters represented in the book and the reader. Moreover, the predominance of offers points out that the reader is invited to observe the relationship and the actions that the child has with Daddy and his roommate and to see how positive it is. The compositional meanings show that both Daddy and his roommate appear in prominent positions to show that they are important in the child's life. In most cases, the written theme coincides with the visual one as a way to reinforce the complementary meaning of both modes of communication in the story.

Key words

Children's picturebooks; multimodality; visual/verbal modes; critical discourse analysis; gender

1. Introduction

This paper is a contribution to the study of the relationship between images and words in the genre of picturebooks. In particular, we will concentrate on the picturebook *Daddy's Roommate* written by Willhoite in 1989. This choice is justified because this is one of the first picturebooks in which a gay relationship is narrated. The father of the boy who narrates the story was married and had a heterosexual relationship. The child narrates the activities that his father does with Frank, his new rooomate, and the things that he does with them. Consequently, this picturebook will allow deepening in gender issues, following Sunderland (2012: 6):

> The representation of gender in fiction is not about gender in the sense of what actual men, women, boys and girls tend to be *like*[1] (in terms of

their socially-shaped abilities, attitudes, language use, social practices, or whatever). Rather, this is gender, in the sense of the *ideas*[2] about men, women, boys and girls, as well as about gender relations, and masculinity and femininity more widely.

Picturebooks incorporate cultural meanings and contribute to children's development of ideology and of understanding cultural norms, social patterns and values (Arizpe, Farrell and McAdam 2013; Evans 2015; Soler Quiler 2015). The main purpose of picturebooks is to help children socialize, i.e., there is a relationship or mediation between the world transmitted in fiction and real life, following Painter (2018: 420): "Printed picturebooks stories have always been a significant resource both for the socialization of young children and for introducing them to the principles and pleasures of literacy and literature".

Analysing children's picturebooks is important because they have a central role in school curricula. They contribute to children's socialization and to their development of ideology and of understanding the world. In this sense, analysing a picturebook where there is a relationship between two men will contribute to broaden gender schemas in children and to be open to different types of love.

The main objectives of this article are: 1) to deconstruct the compositional and interpersonal meanings expressed in the picturebook selected in order to observe the main linguistic and visual strategies used to portray the relationship between two men and between them and the child; 2) to analyse the role of the child's mother in the story from a compositional and interpersonal representational perspective. The fact that the child's father was married before starting a gay relationship and the presence of the mother in different parts of the story are important for the creation of meaning, especially because it is the mother who tells the child that his father is gay and she explains what this means.

2. Literature review

In the last decades, different research studies have concentrated on the way visuals and written text contribute to the creation of meaning in multimodal texts such as advertisements, textbooks, picturebooks, comics and scientific texts (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Molina and Alonso 2016; O'Halloran 2004, 2008; Unsworth 2006, 2014; Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013, among others).

There is no agreement among the disciplinary community in the terminology used to refer to texts that use more than one mode or semiotic channel of communication. In this sense, as O'Halloran et al. (2011: 120) specify: "MDA[3] itself is referred to as 'multimodality', 'multimodal analysis', 'multimodal semiotics' and 'multimodal studies'.

Multimodality is widely used in the systemic community; therefore, in this article we will use this term, which has developed in the last decades (Kress and van Leeuwen 2002, 2006; Kress 1998, 2010, van Leeuwen 2005a and 2005b, 2011, among others) in order to understand the way in which the different semiotic modes are used. In general, mode has been understood as a "socially shaped and

culturally given resource for meaning making" (Kress, 2009: 54), which means that context and culture determine the different modes used in a communicative situation. In this sense, there are some recent studies that have developed the definition of mode, such as those of Elleström (2010) and Bateman (2011).

Children's picturebooks are multimodal. The relationship between the image and the visual to create meaning in these books has been studied by different scholars such as Lewis (2001), Painter (2007, 2008), Serafini (2010), Unsworth and Ortigas (2008), Moya-Guijarro (2014, 2017, 2019a, 2019b) and Pinar and Moya (2016). The multimodal nature of these texts needs a visual grammar that describes how the different elements combine in order to express meaning, following Unsworth (2006: 63–64):

> There are two types of *connection* between images and text. The first of these is known as *projection* and most commonly involves the quoting or reporting of speech or thoughts. The second type of connection involves the *conjunctive relations* of time, place and cause.

Kress and van Leewen's model of visual grammar (2006) propose three metafunctions in the grammar of visual design: the representational, the interpersonal and the compositional. These are based on the three metafunctions proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014): the ideational metafunction concentrates on how the world around and inside us is represented; the interpersonal metafunction focuses on how social interactions and social relationships are established; and the textual metafunction concentrates on how the elements of the text express meaning in a coherent way.

Exploring the relationship between the written text and the visuals in this kind of texts is important for the deconstruction of meaning, in the process of observing how picturebooks narrate actions and represent the world (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2014). The role of the visual is essential to deconstruct he ideas, values and concepts transmitted (Hamer, Nodelman and Reimer 2017; Kümmerling-Meibauer, Meibauer, Nachtigäller and Rohlfing 2015).

The features of the interpersonal and compositional metafunctions that are going to be analysed in the next section are briefly introducedin the next paragraphs.

Considering interpersonal meanings, 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. Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013) refer to social distance, attitude, contact and modality. Regarding image and gaze, characters' images are 'demands' when characters gaze at the viewer. Images as 'offer' present characters without that gaze. Social distance concentrates on the representation of characters as 'close up', 'mid shot' and 'long shot'.

Regarding involvement and power, viewing characters from particular angles contributes to position the viewer: the horizontal angle implies greater or lesser involvement, i.e., when characters face viewers 'front on', they are involved with the audience, whereas their depiction as an oblique angle contributes to detaching them from readers. The vertical angle is associated with the realisation of

power: if viewers look up they are given power whereas what is looked down appears weak and vulnerable (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 140 ff).

Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013: 17) propose a system of orientation, parallel to that of involvement to take into consideration the bodily orientation of the characters to each other: characters can face each other, be placed side by side or angled away.

Considering compositional meanings, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 177) discuss that there are three main types of composition in multimodal texts:

(a) 'Information value': the place in which elements are located, for example, from left to right, from the top to the bottom or from the centre to the margins, can add a determined value.
(b) 'Salience': the different elements of a composition which are designed to catch the readers' attention, for example, appearing in the first or in the second place, the size of an element, the colour contrast or sharpness. Salience contributes to giving importance to certain units of information, called 'focus group' in visual texts (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013: 91).
(c) 'Framing': the presence or absence of frames that connect or disconnect elements of meaning by whether they go or do not go together in the making of meanings. Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013: 103–109) explain that when the only boundary is the page edge, images are 'unbound'. However, when images are set within a page margin that contributes to separate readers from the story, they are 'bound'.

3. Analysis

The analysis will pay attention to the connection between the image and the written text. Due to the limitations of space we will concentrate on two of the three metafunctions, i.e., the representational will not be analysed: 1) the interpersonal because of its importance in the process of deconstructing social relations between the different characters in the picturebook and between the characters and the readers, and 2) the compositional because we want to explore how the text is coherent and related to context.

3.1 Interpersonal choices

The interpersonal metafunction concentrates on the way images connect with the audience. We will concentrate on this metafunction in order to explore the reader-character relationships and the relationships between the different characters in the story. In order to do so, we will pay attention to the systems of image act and gaze, social distance and intimacy, horizontal angle and involvement and vertical angle (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). The aim of this analysis is to find out if the implied relationship between readers and characters is intimate or detached[3]. The analysis of the twenty-nine illustrations shown in Table 1 points out the main visual techniques used by Willhoite to create engagement.

Image act and gaze	Social distance and intimacy	Horizontal angle and involvement	Vertical angle and power
Offer 93,10%	Close-ups 17,24%	Frontal 68,96%	High 0%
Demand 6,90%	Middle-shots 79,31%	Oblique 31,04%	Eye-level 72,41%
	Long shots 3,44%		Low 27,59%
Total 100%	Total 100%	Total 100%	Total 100%

Table 1. Interactive features in *Daddy's Roommate*

Middle-shots and close-ups suggest involvement between the characters repre-sented in the book and the reader. The predominance of offers points out that the reader is invited to observe the relationship and the actions that the child has with Daddy and his roommate and to see how positive it is. Moreover, readers can contemplate characters in the privacy of their daily lives by the use of eye level and frontal angles. This justifies there normally being an element such as a table, a sofa or a newspaper that separates the characters' private life from readers. So-cial distance is a very important dimension in exploring the interactive meanings of visuals. In this sense, the author:

> [...] must choose to make them look at the viewer or not, so they must also, and at the same time, choose to depict them as close to or far away from the viewer- and this applies to the depiction of objects also. And, like the choice between the 'offer' and the 'demand', the choice of distance can suggest different relations between represented participants and viewers (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 124)

The general tendency is to represent characters in 'mid-shot' by placing an ob-ject between the reader and the character represented, which contributes to cre-ating a social distance between the story and the readers' context: a newspaper (p. 3), a table (p. 4, p. 9), an eiderdown (p. 5, 9), other people and two camels (p. 11), a towel and some flowers (p. 12), a shopping cart (p. 13), a television (p. 16), among others. However, on page 5, when the two men appear repre-sented with no clothes on their torsos, Daddy appears 'close up' to the audi-ence while they are shaving, i.e., both men are clearly portrayed sharing intima-cy. Distance is associated with how close we are in our relationships, following van Leeuwen (2008: 138): "We "keep our distance" from strangers (if given the chance); we are "close to" our nearest and dearest; we "work closely" with some-one; and so on.

Of the five examples of close-ups, three represent the child close to the audi-ence, establishing closeness and creating intimacy. It is significant that the child narrating the story is represented close to the reader on the very first page of the book, looking at the audience sharing the following message: "My Mommy and Daddy got a divorce last year". There is a symbolic space reinforced by a bubble

where his dad is seen leaving home, pointing out that the relationship between his mother and his father ended in the past.

The second time the child appears close to the readers is on page 7, where he is playing with Frank. However, this time there is no contact with the audience because we see his back, which contributes to highlight Frank: although he is in a long shot, he is facing the readers. This visual is interesting because it shows that the child has a very good relationship with Frank, his father's roommate. Representing both characters playing together on top of the written text "Frank likes me too!" contributes to foreground that Frank and the child get on well. This is the first of the following five pages where both appear together. This first page is the only one where the child is not facing the audience; he is just offering the audience the different actions he can do with Frank. After these five pages, there is a sequence of pages where we find Daddy, Frank and the child doing different things together, which suggests that they are integrated and therefore this is a new family model.

Then, on the second page, it is Daddy's roommate who is located close to the audience, reinforcing that he is important in the story and that it is he who has changed Daddy's life. This page is significant because it is the first one in which we find Daddy, the child and Frank. Taking into consideration the system of proximity, there is a clear distance between the three characters, especially between the two men, because the child is in the middle. However, from the next page on, the characters appear closer to each other, and therefore they "[...] are consistently shown in an intimate or close personal relationship [...]" (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013: 16).

Although the child is close to the audience on page 7, that fact that his back is to the audience does not contribute to creating a close relationship. It s not until page 14 that we find the child again close to the audience. This visual appears in a climatic moment of the story, right after the one where the child's mother has told him that Daddy and Frank are gay. It is after this visual that it is clearly stated that "Being gay is just one more kind of love" and different expressions of affection between Frank and Daddy, Daddy and the child and the three of them can be observed until the end of the story.

Apart from the three examples we have already referred to where the child is close to the readers, there are two significant examples where Daddy and Frank are close up. These contribute to foreground the relationship they have and share with the audience: The first one is on page 5 when both men are in the bathroom shaving. Representing them next to each other, using the bathroom at the same time and showing their chests makes clear that there is an intimate relationship between the men.

The second example of a close-up is on page 15: Frank is hugging Daddy while they look at each other. This way of representation makes clear that they love each other and that they express their feelings. These close-ups create a sense of intimacy with the audience because only the head and upper part of the body of characters is represented.

This way of using the system of proximity to present both characters so close to each other and to reinforce their intimacy is reinforced by the written text

where the fact of being gay is identified with one kind of love: "Being gay is just one more kind of love". Moreover, the text contributes to excuse gay love, to present it as something that it is not unusual and counters a presupposed negative stereotype, which highlights an ideology where being gay is normal and accepted.

Regarding the spatial representation of characters, the book starts with a horizontal angle (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; 133ff; van Leeuwen 2008: 139) because we see the depicted characters frontally, which is reinforced by the fact that the child looks directly at the audience. As Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013: 17) put it:

> That is to say, when characters (and settings) are presented facing us 'front on', we have a maximum sense of involvement with them as part of our own world, whereas if they are depicted at an oblique angle, we are positioned to be more detached from them.

After this first page, we find three visuals with oblique angles that help us see the characters from the side. The fact that none of the depicted characters look at the audience and that the visuals are seen from an oblique horizontal angle invite readers to see the actions with detachment. Readers are invited to observe the three characters (Daddy, Frank and the child) at home. In the first case, they are wearing normal clothes because Daddy and the child come from outside and Frank is waiting for them at home (this is the moment where the child meets Frank). In the second case, they are wearing pyjamas, which suggest that there is a close relationship between them. In the following visuals, where Daddy and Frank are represented eating together, sleeping together, shaving together, fighting together and making up, it is again the horizontal angle because readers are involved by observing frontally all the actions that the characters are doing.

Then, after several pages where just Daddy and Frank are represented, there is a change in the story on page 7; now there are several pages where only Frank and the child appear. This change in the narration of the story is clearly indicated not only because this is one of the two cases in which we find a character with his back to the audience (the child) but also because this is a clear example of viewer detachment (through obliqueness). This angle and presenting the child with his back to the audience contribute to highlight that at this point in the story, the visuals will narrate the different actions that both characters share. In the pages after this, again the horizontal angle is chosen by the illustrator so that the audience can be involved in the different actions that Frank and the child do together.

Then, there is again a change in the story: the child is represented leaving his mother's house to meet Daddy and Frank, who have come to pick him up in a car. There is an oblique angle that helps readers to be more detached from the action. Moreover, representing the characters in mid-shot helps readers observe this special moment in the story where the child leaves the house where he normally lives with his mother and goes to stay with his father and his new roommate. Next, we find different pages visually narrating the things that the child does with his father and Frank: go to ball games, visit the zoo, go to the beach, work in the yard, go shopping, sing at the piano. In all these pages, we find the

horizontal angle so that readers can be involved in the activities they do, with the exception of the visual where the characters visit the zoo; the oblique angle here and their representation in a small size while the animals are salient by their size and by being foregrounded, establishes a clear distance from the audience.

On page 14 there is a change in the story, and the child is represented with his mother in the kitchen. As it happened on page 7, the child is located again on the right of the page with his back to the audience. This is another example of viewer detachment (through obliqueness). As in the previous example, the use of the angle indicates a change in the story. This visual is very important because it coincides with the moment that the mother makes explicit the gay relationship that the father has with Frank: "Mommy says Daddy and Frank are gay".

Next, the child is represented alone in the middle of the visual. The fact that it is a demand image, that he has an open posture by appearing with his arms open and the frontal angle contribute to foreground him at the same time as he is presented close to the audience. The child's gaze "creates a form of direct address. It acknowledges the viewers explicitly, addressing them with a visual 'you'" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 117) (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013: 19). In fact, he shares with the audience that he did not know what being gay meant and the mother exaplained it to him. The written answer to what the child wants to know appears in the next visual: "Being gay is just one more kind of love". The frontal angle used to represent Daddy and Frank makes explicit the gay relationship between the men, and their happiness.

Finally, the author uses the oblique angle in the last three visuals to establish a distance between readers and the expression of love between the father and the child in front of the mother at her house, Daddy and Frank watching TV in their house and the child going to the cinema with Daddy and his roommate. The reader is invited to observe the positive relationship between all the characters in the book. The mid-shots and the offers reinforce the distance with the audience, who are invited to observe but not to be involved.

Regarding vertical angle and power, there is a predominance of eye-level angles (72,41%) over low angles (27,59%). This implies that readers are at the same level as the characters and are identified with them. Moreover, no high angles have been identified, which supports the equal connection between characters and readers.

When considering social interaction, the key idea is if the depicted people look at the audience or not (van Leeuwen 2008: 141). The general tendency observed in the picturebook is to represent characters as not looking at the audience. Consequently, the actions they do are 'offered' to the audience. As Unsworth (2010: 285), following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), point out: "[...] an 'offer' does not have the gaze of any represented participant directed to the viewer and hence provides a portrayal for the viewer's contemplation". In this sense, on most pages, there is no explicit dialogue between the characters and the audience.

However, the two demand images appear in two significant moments of the story: the first one is on the first page of the book. Representing the child on the right of the page looking at the audience while he shares that his Mommy and Daddy got a divorce last year invites the audience to be involved. The second one

is the close-up on page 14: the child is looking at the audience and establishing direct address, as a clear example of demand image: "[...] the participant's gaze (and the gesture, if present) demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 118). In this case, the demand is clearly reinforced by his body posture, because he appears right in the centre of the page with his arms open. The facial and body posture contribute to make this image dialogic, because viewers are addressed with a visual 'you' (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 117).

3.2 Compositional meanings

The picturebook starts making reference to the fact that the protagonist's father was heterosexual, because right at the beginning of the book we can read: "My Mommy and Daddy got a divorce last year". This written text is next to the child, who is foregrounded. In the background, included in a bubble, just behind the child indicating that this is something that happened in the past, the father is represented leaving home, putting his suitcases in the car and the child and the mother seeing him go. There is no doubt that he is narrating the story of his family one year ago. It is also clear that he looks like his father, and both have the same type and colour of hair.

   The image in the bubble is clearly divided in two parts: the mother and the child are framed by the window and the curtains on the right background of the page layout; and we find the father looking at them saying good-bye. It is significant that although the mother and the child appear on the right, the most important part of the information, their bodies are cut by the window frame and their size is small. By contrast, although the father is on the left, the place of known information, the fact that he is represented bigger than the mother and the child and that his whole body appears in the visual foregrounds him and makes clear that the story that follows is about him.

   After that, on page 3, the written text situates us in the present with the marked textual theme "now": Now there's somebody new at Daddy's house. The person that is referred to as new in the written discourse also is foregrounded in the visual framed by the sofa, whereas the child appears in the midground framed by the carpet and the father is situated in the background, framed by the door. Then, on the next page, it is the father who is foregrounded because the fact that there is a new person in his house is already known. Frank, the father's roommate, is located in the midground, and it is the child who is situated in the background, joined by vectors to his father and to Frank. He is represented lying on the carpet, reading in the same posture as his father. After these introductory pages, the two men are presented doing different things together: working, eating, sleeping, shaving and sometimes even fighting.

   The fact that Frank has a moustache is a sign of masculinity. Moreover, it is Frank who drives the car on page 10, an activity done by most men when they are with a woman in a car. In addition, presenting Frank putting cream on the child's father's back while they are on the beach (p. 12) or hugging him (pages 15 and 16)

suggest that he is the more masculine of the two, because those are actions that heterosexual men do with their partners. However, both appear doing housework on page 4, which suggests that there is an equal division of housework.

Daddy is foregrounded on some pages: 4, 5, 9, and 12. Nevertheless, it is Frank who appears on the right, where the most important part of the information is, on page 6, when the two men appear fighting (Frank is angry, standing up showing Daddy a shirt with a burn mark from the iron). But then, on the next page it is also Frank who is on the right when they are making up after the argument. It seems that it is Frank who started the argument and it is he who seems to start the process of making up, because he is holding Daddy's shoulder.

After this, we find different pages outside home where Frank is also given importance in the child's life; both appear together without Daddy in different visuals: they appear playing together, Frank tells him jokes and riddles and he helps him catch bugs for show-and-tell. Then, the action takes place at home again, and Frank is sitting in an armchair next to the child, reading to him. They also appear together to point out that Frank makes great peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches. On the next page Daddy, the child and Frank appear together after the child has had a nightmare; Daddy is hugging the child, and Frank is talking and chasing the nightmare away.

At that point in the picturebook, the child is represented leaving home with his mother on the left, the boy on the right running somewhere followed by his dog, clearly indicating that he is leaving home for the weekend and going to spend it with Daddy and his roommate. On the next pages, the child iss between Daddy and Frank doing different things:

> We go to ball games.
> Visit the zoo.
> Go to the beach.
> Work in the yard.
> Go shopping.
> And in the evenings, we sing at the piano.

It is significant that on all the pages describing the actions just mentioned, it is Frank who is on the right, the place of the most important part of the information, and therefore he is highlighted. In fact, there is a general tendency to Frank being on the right, which contributes to foregrounding him not only in Daddy's life but also in the story.

The picturebook ends with the two men sitting on the sofa watching TV and eating popcorn while Frank has his arm round Daddy. The very last page represents the two men with the child in the middle queuing outside the cinema. The child is holding Frank's arm and Daddy has his arms around the child's shoulders. Again, the fact that Frank is the one on the right suggests that he is the one who has more power and more importance. The three characters are followed by a heterosexual couple in the cinema queue; the woman appears first followed by a man who is touching her shoulders. Consequently, on this page we can observe one of the new family models represented by Daddy, the child and Frank and a traditional couple.

The analysis of theme-rheme relations is relevant to see the characters who appear on the prominent position in the written text and to analyse if the written theme coincides with the visual one. It is observed that most of the themes are unmarked because they coincide with the subject in declarative clauses: 'My Mommy and Daddy', 'Daddy and his roommate' (this is found at the beginning and at the end of the story), 'they', 'Frank', 'he', 'we', 'Mommy', 'I', 'she', 'being gay' and 'love'. The fact that apart from the characters or the pronouns used to refer to them, 'being gay' and 'love' have thematic position contributing to reinforcing the connection between both concepts.

There are some examples of marked themes that contribute to highlight moments in the story; for example, on page 3, the marked theme points out the introduction of Daddy's roommate: "Now there's somebody new at Daddy's house". After the enumeration of the different actions that Daddy and Frank do together pointing out that they share their life, there is a marked theme on page 6 to show that the couple has arguments at times: "And sometimes even fight together. But they always make up". The next marked themes highlight that the child does things with his father's roommate: "Just like Daddy, he tells me jokes and riddles" (p. 7); "And chases nightmares away" (p. 9); "And in the evenings, we sing at the piano" (p. 13). Finally, the last marked theme is after the mother tells the child that Daddy and his roommate are gay "At first I didn't know that that meant. So she explained it" (p. 14). Table 2 summarizes the main types of themes.

Themes	Absolute values	Values in percentages
Simple theme	18	69,23%
Multiple theme	8	30,77%%
Total number	26	100%

Table 2. Types of themes

The most general pattern is the continuous or constant theme (Danes, 1974) because the same theme is shared by a series of clauses. In all these cases there is an ellipsis of the subject, Daddy and his roommate in some examples, Frank and we (referring to the child, Daddy and his roommate).

It is only at the end of the book that we observe an example of a zig-zag pattern, which coincides with the climatic moment of the story where the concept of gay is foregrounded: On page 15, the rheme "gay" in "Mommy says Daddy and Frank are gay" becomes a theme as a way of pointing out the child's acceptance of his father being gay: "Being gay is just one more kind of love". The same thing happens with the word love: "And love is the best kind of happiness". After this, we observe a partial repetition of the rheme (happy) as a way to reinforce that characters are happy with the gay relationship: Daddy and his roommate are very happy together. And I'm happy too! (p. 17). The use of the additive conjunction and as a textual theme shows that the happiness of the father is connected with that of the child.

In most cases, the written theme coincides with the visual one as a way to reinforce the complementary meaning of both modes of communication in the story;

for example, when Daddy and his roommate or they and the child are doing things together. However, this is not the case the first time Frank is mentioned in the written theme, because he appears in the visual at the back of the page, on the left, and he is smaller than the child. However, the fact that he is facing the audience while the child has his back to the audience adds attention to him. After the pages where Frank is doing activities with the child, he continues being the written theme (there is an ellipsis of he as the subject) but in the visual, it is the father who is represented hugging the child after he has had a nightmare. The written theme Mommy on page 14 coincides with her representation in the centre of the visual in the climatic moment of the story where she explains to the child that his father is gay. The visual themes of Daddy and his roommate and Daddy and the child showing affection reinforce the written themes 'being gay' and 'love', which is the final message of the story.

Part of the picturebook situates the action at home and part of it outside. No matter where the action takes place, characters are framed by windows (pages 2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 15), doors (page 3), trees (page 7), houses (pages 10, 12) or the kitchen (page 14). This contributes to situate characters in context and to foreground them in the visual.

This picturebook follows "the more frequent choice for a complementary vertical layout in a picturebook is for the verbiage to come below the picture [...]" (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013: 96). This is the pattern found on all pages. The visual is framed in all cases and the written text is after it, occupying just one line; the visual is the ideal and the page is the real. Consequently, this layout highlights that the image is given importance. This frame is only modified on the very first page, where the boy telling the story appears foregrounded and the image of his father leaving home after the divorce from his mother is located in a bubble. This suggests that the boy is situating the reader to what happened in the past before narrating what is happening now. This is the only page where the verb tense is past simple. The rest of the pages use simple present. In addition, the textual theme 'now' on the second page clearly indicates that there is a change in the father's life at the present moment.

Considering framing, all the visuals are bound because they are "[...] set within a page margin or border, demarcate the story world as more distinctly separated from the reader's world than unbould ones and may also serve to 'contain' or confine the character" (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013: 105). In this way, there is a clear division between the world presented in the picturebook and the readers' world. This is also highlighted with the fact that most of the visuals are offer, i.e., the action done by the characters is presented tobe observed by readers.

In focus, the fact that the image occupies the majority of the page means that it is the most important element to catch the readers' attention. The main focus pattern found in this book is centrifocal centred. However, in some cases there are examples of centrifocal polarised, where characters are placed in polarised positions joined by different vectors (pages 2, 3, 7).

3.3 Exploring the role of the child's mother's reappearance in the story: interpersonal and compositional meanings

The child's mother has a very significant role in this picturebook because her presence shows that there is no doubt about Daddy being the biological father of the child who narrates the story, due to the explicit connection between him and the child's mother. The mother appears four times in the story, which are important moments for the theme of the story. This is what justifies that she is treated as a separate entity and that this section offers an analysis of her presence in the story due to her relative interpersonal and compositionalprominence in the picturebook.

3.3.1 Interpersonal meanings

The mother is always represented looking at her ex-husband (p. 1, 16), looking at the child (p. 24) or looking at both her son and his dad (p. 27), i.e., she is always represented in relation to someone else. As the majority of the visuals in the picturebook, she is included in the category of offer. Her presence is in middle shots, with the exception of the first page where she is in long shot, when portrayed in a bubble, inside the house, clearly framed by the window and the curtains. There is social distance between the mother and the audience not only because she is situated in the background on the first page but also because there is a tree, a table or a suitcase between her and the audience.

The general tendency to portray her using the frontal angle contributes to highlight her role in certain moments of the picturebook. Consequently, she is given a significant role in the story although she is not the protagonist and the plot is not about her or her previous relationship with the child's father. In addition, there is no social interaction between the mother and the audience, because she does not look directly at readers.

Apart from the role of the mother to make clear that Daddy is the child's biological father, she is important in the picturebook because she makes explicit to the child that his father is gay: this is clearly expressed in the written text on page 14, when the mother is cooking in the kitchen next to the child. There is no reference to gay men in the written discourse until that moment. However, that is suggested in the visuals because both men appear in bed (p. 6).

Sunderland and Mclashan (2012: 162–170) refer to three textual strategies to promote, accept or understand families with same-sex parents: the 'different' strategy ("where having two Mums or Dads is conceptually recognized as different by the child" (Sunderland and Mclashan 2012: 165); the 'backgrounding' strategy ("These books do not address the issue of gay sexuality directly or even indirectly, but rather issues surrounding the family or personal life, which are not specific to gay families" (Sunderland and Mclashan 2012: 168) and the 'gay strategy'. *Daddy's Roommate* is a clear example of the last strategy, because the fact that the father is gay is foregrounded from the beginning of the book. Following Sunderland and Mclashan (2012: 163), "[...] gay sexuality is discussed explicitly,

in part through the device of explaining the word to the child in the story". The introductory sentence is, in fact, the textual component of the story: Daddy and his roommate Frank live together. Then, from the beginning of the story the father and his roommate appear doing things together:

> Work together.
> Eat together.
> Sleep together.
> Shave together.
> And sometimes even fight together.
> But they always make up.

3.3.2 Compositional meanings

The first time that the mother appears is at the beginning of the picturebook, on the right next to the child, on the first page, where the child makesmakes reference to their parents' divorce: "My Mommy and Daddy got a divorce last year". Only half her body is seen through the window. The father is represented bigger and in full body, a clear way of making him salient, which contributes to make him responsible for the divorce. Although on the first page of the picturebook the child's father is saying good-bye and the child replies to him with the same gesture, she is just looking at him, while she is holding the curtain with her hand so that she can really see that he is leaving. She is serious, observing her ex-husband act of leaving.

Presenting them inside the house clearly framed by the window while the father is outside putting his suitcases in the car points out that the mother and the child are passive and just observing what the father does, whereas the father is active, represented moving out, leaving home. This visual makes clear that the father is leaving home to start a new life. However, it is not until the next visual that it is pointed out that Daddy has a newpartner: Frank. The child states that they live together: "Daddy and his roommate Frank live together". The contrast between narrating the divorce in past simple and the present simple to refer to the person that his father lives with in the present makes clear that the child is aware of the change in his parents' life, which also affects his life. Representing the action of the father leaving home inside a bubble behind the child's head makes clear that this is a mental, cognitive process, because the child is sharing with readers an action that took place in the past.

The mother is on the left when she reappears on page 10. In this way, her representation is varied: receding because she has moved into the background setting (relative to previous depiction) (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013: 65). This is a very clear way of portraying the mother and what the child does with her during the week as known information, because the written text below the image just says: "When weekends come" and on the next page we can see how the father and Frank arrive by car to pick up the child and do things with him, as we can read: "we do all sorts of things together". This is a clear example of the

double-page spread being a single layout unit, where it is very easy to observe the given/new division of information placed on the left and on the right. By reading both pages together visually and linguistically, it is observed that characters appear in a row and they are connected; the mother and the father are standing up while Frank is in the driver's seat. In this way, the mother and the father are represented in a symmetrical way, one at each side of the child, following Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013: 66): "[...] a symmetrical presentation of comparable images on the page is a way of 'covertly' constructing them as members of the same class".

Her facial expression contrasts with the one on the first page: this time her mouth is open and she seems to be smiling while she greets with her left hand, which suggests that she has now accepted her husband's new relationship. The mother, the child and the father are connected in order to guide children in the process of connecting the actions presented in both pages, supported by the written text, which is incomplete after reading just the first part presented on the left page. Presenting the dog running between the mother and the child also contributes to joining both characters and what they do together during the week. She is facing her ex-husband, who is represented looking at her and at the child on the next page, which suggests that she is saying hello to him instead of good-bye to the child because he is represented running towards the father, not looking at the mother.

The reappearance of the mother on page 14 coincides with a climatic moment of the story because it is the moment where the mother shares with the child that his father and Frank are gay. The logico-semantic relation expressed by the multimodal relation between the visual and the written text is that of projection (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013: 75), because in the written language a verbal process is used, and then we find the clause that is being projected: "Mommy says Daddy and Frank are gay".

The written ideational theme (Mommy) coincides with the visual one because the mother is right in the centre of the visual on page 14. She is clearly framed by the kitchen table, the fridge, and a piece of furniture at the back. Representing the child on her right, looking at her attentively, contributes to focus the attention on her. She is the central element of the visual not only because of her location and the different kitchen pots pointing at her, but also because of the clothes she is wearing: a red shirt and blue trousers. She is wearing a pink apron on which it is written "World's Best Mom" followed by a red flower. This emphasizes her role as mother. She appears to be cooking, the only time that the mother is represented doing something with the child (he is also holding a bowl and a spoon).

The reappearance of the mother in this visual associated with telling the child that his father is gay rely on the written text, because apart from the written text on this visual, in the next one where the child is alone, we can read: "At first I didn't know what that meant. So she explained it".

Finally, the last time that the mother appears, at the end of the book and after the meaning of gay has been explained to the child, she is also observing, as she did in the first visual, i.e., she has the same passive role of observing at

the beginning and at the end of the picturebook. However, in this case there are significant differences: although she also is located on the right, this time we can see her whole body, which contributes to her importance; she is sitting on a stool with a close body posture because her arms are closed, symbolizing that she does not accept the new situation. However, the two cups next to her elbow suggest that they have had a drink together and that there is a good relationship between them because the father comes to leave the child after they have spent the weekend together. The dog is again next to her, as in the second time she appeared, but this time it is between her and the father and the son. They are represented hugging each other, framed by an arc inside the mother's house. This contrasts with the representation of the mother and the child in the first visual, framed by the window but on the right of the page.

As it happened the second time that the mother appeared, the visuals in the two pages have to be read together as the written text makes clear: on the left page we find Frank hugging Daddy while they look at each other laughing and the written text "Being gay is just one more type of love". Then, in the next visual it is Daddy and the child who appear hugging inside the mother's house, and the written text starts with the textual theme, followed by the word love as ideational theme, which is also the last word that appears in the rheme of the previous written text. This is an example of a zig-zag theme-rheme pattern that contributes to reinforce the idea of love and happiness no matter if it is between two men or not: "And love is the best kind of happiness". The end of the picturebook is characterized by the repetition of the adjective happy in the rheme and the visual representation of the two men alone at home and of them and the child outside the cinema as happy. In this way, it is reinforced that the child accepts the new relationship that his father has with Frank.

4. Discussion

Although the utilization of offers in the visuals and declarative sentences in the written text may imply distance from the readers, the middle-shots situate the child at that same level as the characters. In addition, the frontal viewpoint contributes to children being involved in the story. The two offers in two significant moments in the book contribute to the creation of affinity with the audience. In this sense, the analysis shows that visuals create more affinity with the readers than words do.

The written language in this picturebook does not encourage interaction, because all the sentences are declarative, with the exception of two exclamatives that show the child's emotions. The first one appears in the middle of the story, in the first of a set of pages where the child is doing things with Frank, his father's roommate: "Frank likes me too!" on page 7 clearly expresses that the child is happy with Frank and that he feels accepted and integrated. The exclamative "And I'm happy too!" is on the very last page of the book and makes clear that the child is happy with the relationship that his father has. This way of ending the story can be useful to tell children who have gay fathers that they can be happy and that they can be

integrated in the new relationship that their father started with a man. Moreover, the fact that the child is the only character who looks at the audience twice in the book shows that creating affinity with the reader is not a priority for the author but to narrate a story emphasizing that a formerly heterosexual man now has a gay relationship and having a child is accepted by his new partner.

The main visual characteristics of the characters, in this case Daddy and his roommate, Frank, contribute to the way masculinity is perceived by children (Campagnaro 2015). In the picturebook analysed, gay masculinity is normalised and the expressions of love between both men is presented as natural. The fact that the book starts with the child who narrates the story making reference to the divorce between his mother and father and to the new relationship that his father has with his roommate, contributes to the normalisation of this type of relationships.

The child appears sometimes at his mother's house, but most of the story takes place at his father's house or doing things with his father and Frank; this shows that the new relationship that his father has is accepted by the child and it intends to be an example for other children with similar types of family. This is an example of acceptance of family types of same-sex parents. Consequently, this type of picturebook contributes to an inclusive curriculum, so that children do not fear being discriminated against because of the sexual orientation of their families (Rowell 2007; Sunderland and Mclashan 2012), to show respect for different types of family and to present relationships different from the heterosexual ones as natural.

In fact, this story can help children to be aware that there are different ways to establish affective-sexual relationships. It is explicit that the child's parents got a divorce at the beginning of the book, which makes clear that they were married and had a heterosexual relationship. After that fact is narrated, the author points out that the father now has a new relationship with a man called Frank. In this sense, children observe how different affective relationships are created in the same story, which can have an effect on the way they create their gender schemas (Coats 2018; Soler Quiles 2015).

The analysis has shown that there are different examples of characters expressing their affection and their emotions in this picturebook. There are different cases of characters represented having physical contact between them, which contributes to reinforcing the close relationship between them and the way they express their feelings. In this sense, children will have different examples of the expression of emotions and contact that will help them to understand their feelings (Nikolajeva 2014). In Nikolajeva's words (2018: 110):

> Yet as picturebooks are likely to be the first kind of books that emerging readers encounter, they may potentially offer a powerful tool for understanding one's own and other people's emotions, in particular for preliterate readers with a limited ability to make connections between the experiencing of an emotion and its verbal signifier.

The relationship between Daddy and Frank is normalised, and the fact of the child living in a family of a same-sex parents is presented as natural. Foregrounding

a gay family and the expression of love contribute to show that it is possible to have a happy relationship between two men. The gay relationship is explicit from the beginning of the story, because Daddy and Frank appear represented sleeping together on page 5. This is reinforced by the fact of presenting clear signs of affection between Daddy and Frank: Frank touches Daddy's shoulder when they are making up after having a fight (p. 6); Frank appears putting cream on Daddy's back while they are at the beach (p. 12) and finally, at the end of the book, Frank is hugging Daddy twice at home. It is meaningful than the page between these two shows Daddy and the child hugging while the mother is situated on the right looking at them. This hug is a symbolic way of the child showing acceptance of the gay relationship that the child's father has with Frank.

There is no doubt that the climatic moment of the book is when we find Frank hugging Daddy (p. 15) and below it the written text: "Being gay is just one more kind of love", which contributes to construct the normality of gay love. The written message and the visual are complementary, and the children reading this picturebook will clearly understand that there can be love between two men.

This sentence is illustrated by a visual where Frank is hugging the child's father; they both smile and look at each other, indicating that they are in love. The next page contrasts with this one because it represents the mother looking at the child and the father while they are hugging and kissing. As on page 10, the dog is placed between the mother and the child, establishing a division between the previous family they were together and the change that has taken place in their life after the father left home because of being gay. The dog is also happy, his tail up. The picturebook ends normalising the relationship that dad has with Frank:

> Daddy and his roommate are very happy together.
> And I'm happy too!

After page 15, a very clear characteristic between the representation of the characters in the last pages of the picturebook is that the different expressions of affection observed (hugs, kisses, or just touching each other) means that the characters are presented close to each other.

5. Conclusion

This is a very clear example of a picturebook where a new family type is normalised. In this sense, this picturebook illustrates a gender-progressive ideology because it presents the relationship that a previously heterosexual man with a son has now with another man. The normalisation of this type of relationship will facilitate children not only respecting gay relationships but also see them as normal and natural family patterns where the expression of love is present.

The analysis of the written text and of the visuals shows that the expressions of affection are easy between the son and his father and between Daddy and Frank. In this sense, this book points out clear signs of affection between men, which can be associated with the characteristics of new masculinities because

men leave behind the classical characteristics of hegemonic masculinity in order to do housework or express affection, which has been normally done only by women.

The interpersonal meanings contribute towards involving readers in the story due to the predominance of middle-shots and close-ups. From the compositional point of view, the fact that the father and his roommate share the prominent position in the visuals and in the written text contributes to giving them equal importance in the story and to normalising the gay relationship. In addition, the child's mother has a significant role because she appears at important moments in the story and because it is she who explains to the child what gay means.

There are many implications that the analysis of the picturebook has, including pedagogical ones: children who read these books can learn to see housework as any other activity not associated with one of the fathers. This contrasts with what happens in some traditional heterosexual couples, where it is the woman who takes care of housework. The fact that Daddy and his roommate appear sharing housework and doing many things together can contribute to foreground equality. Moreover, social diversity is foregrounded from the beginning of the story because of the open expression of the change of the child's father's identity from heterosexual to gay.

Acknowledgement

Notes

[1]   Italics appear in the original text.
[2]   Italics appear in the original text.
[3]   MDA refers to Multimodal Discourse Analysis.
[4]   Due to copyright permission, I cannot illustrate the analysis with visuals from the book but some of them can be seen in the following link: https://www.amazon.com/Daddys-Roommate-Wonderland-Michael-Willhoite/dp/1555831184

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