[Characterization by Means of Verbal and Visual Transitivity in Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963)]

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[Abstract] *Framed with Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, the paper studies verbal and visual transitivity in the construction of characters in Maurice Sendak's* Where the Wild Things Are *(1963). While the verbal transitivity is determined by the semantic property of a lexical verb, the visual transitivity is realized by vectors, by the shapes dominating the characters' appearance, and by the positioning of the character on a page. The paper concludes that the dynamic relation between visual and verbal transitivity functions as an effective means of characterization that results in the formation of Max's personality.*

[Keywords] *transitivity; SFG; visual grammar; Halliday; Kress and van Leeuwen; Sendak*

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[1]   Introduction

A picturebook story, like any other type of word-image text, is built on Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar (SFG) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar. In SFG, pictures and words are chosen from their systems of verbal and visual resources (systemic) and organized according to a set of rules (grammar) in such a structure so as to successfully convey the meaning of a text (functional). The combination and interdependence of words and pictures perform three metafunctions (Halliday, 1994) that help to create a meaningful text. First, both pictures and words work with cohesive devices, and thus the textual function is performed. They also help to establish a bond between the author and the reader, and thus the interpersonal metafunction is performed. Additionally, the interplay between words and pictures enables the narrator to construct a fictional world, and thus the ideational metafunction is performed. This metafunction organizes three crucial narrative components, i.e. characters, events and circumstances, in a way that enables the target readership to share the intended narrative experience. This organization is allowed by the system of transitivity that "construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types" (Halliday, 1994, p. 106). This means that words and pictures follow certain grammatical rules in order to capture what is happening in a story (i.e. the individual events that build the plot), to whom (i.e. the characters engaged in the plot), and under what circumstances (i.e. the temporal, spatial, mental and psychological conditions that are associated with the individual events and/or with the participants). The selection of particular events, circumstances and characters can be either verbalized or visualized, or both verbalized and visualized. Since language is perceived linearly while pictures are perceived spatially, there is always a dynamic relation between these two codes, which has an impact on the pace of the narrative and the reader's comprehension of the story (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006). The possibilities of choices are what O'Halloran et al. (2019, p. 446) identify as a multi-directional relation, accentuating that words and pictures function as "parts of a whole which are perceived in relation to each other". A picturebook narrative thus represents a whole whose "full significance can only be obtained if both verbal and visual modalities are read in combination and as interdependent components of the same multimodal production" (Moya, 2011, p. 2 982).

The point of departure of this paper is that both words and pictures participate in the process of characterization, that is how the characters and their relationship develop and how the characters are meant to be perceived by the reader. In his work on characterization in plays and other texts, Culpeper (2001) speaks about textual clues that help the reader to construct a character's identity. These clues are found in both the narrator's and in the characters' linguistic behaviour. In a picturebook narrative, a character's identity is predominantly constructed by the visual code, since the image of a character enables the reader to learn about his or her appearance. Moreover, as Painter et al. (2014, p. 56) add, "the viewer can, as in life, infer from this (and the depicted context) other categories, such as age, class, ethnicity, role and place in the family". The character's visualization thus communicates not only what the character looks like, but also their demographic

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and social aspects. All these traits might or might not be also communicated via language. This paper aims to describe how words and images participate in characterization in one of the most famous and influential picturebooks of the twentieth century, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, published in 1963 (for an assessment of the book and its influence, see e.g. Stanton, 1998; Nodelman, 1988; or Cech, 1995). Its artistic and aesthetic values, as well as its educational content, were recognized a year later, in 1964, when the book received the prestigious Caldecott Medal (American Library Association, 1996).

The plot of the book is very simple. A boy called Max misbehaves in such a way that his mother sends him to his bedroom without supper. Being upset with his mother, Max escapes into the world of his imagination, where he meets creatures called wild things. He becomes their king and continues misbehaving with them. After this wild rumpus, he feels lonely, so he says goodbye to the wild things and returns home, where supper awaits him. Despite Max's fantastic adventure, it is in fact a story about a child-parent relationship in which the child protagonist experiences humiliation, exercises power control over socially subordinated individuals (the wild things), and in the end, achieves a reconciliation with his mother (Gilead, 1991; Gottlieb, 2009; Pavlik, 2011). Keenan ascribes the book's popularity with both children and adults to the fact that Sendak managed to turn Max into "a cultural icon" (Keenan, 1996, p. 144). Max's iconicity can be explained by the overall topic of social inequality between a child and a parent. In Cech's words (1995, p. 121), the reader witnesses Max's "ego-formation", a complicated psychological process that helps to form his personality. The discrepancy between Max's social inferiority in the real world and the social superiority he gains in the world of his fantasies reflects a common childhood experience and is supposed to make Max realize that being a parent, an adult in a socially higher position, also encompasses being responsible for those in a socially lower position, such as children.

Although several scholars comment on the interplay between words and pictures in this story (Nodelman, 1988; Lewis, 2001; Salisbury and Styles, 2012; Painter et al., 2014), none of them discuss how means of verbal and visual transitivities are combined in order to construct the characters and to reflect the development of their relation. Sendak, who both authored and illustrated the book, stated in a 1966 profile in *The New Yorker* that in this book he had managed "to fuse himself as a writer and as an illustrator" (Hentoff, 1966, p. 64). In other words, the choice of words and pictures in the narrative was fully in Sendak's control. The objective of this paper is to study which types of verbal processes and which types of visual representations participate in the construction of the characters of Max, his mother, and the wild things. The paper endeavours to prove that the interplay between verbal and visual transitivity functions as a means of characterization through which Sendak achieved the formation of Max's personality.

[2] Theoretical background

In SFG, transitivity is understood as a grammatical facility that enables language users to capture their experience (and experiences) in language. A grammatically correct clause

enables us to communicate not only who/what does what to whom/what, but also what is the relation between an action or a state expressed by a lexical verb and the participants or objects involved in the action or state. Halliday (1994, pp. 109–144) distinguishes six types of processes in which participants (both human and non-human) can have several roles. The individual process types depend on a semantic property of a verb, and the participants' roles depend on whether the participant is the one that does the process or whether the process is done to him or her or somehow affects them. Toolan (2013, p. 89) distinguishes the former type as 'doers' of the action or state, and the latter as 'done-to' participants. Besides the processes and the participants, the system of transitivity allows us to talk about circumstances that accompany a particular process. Since the scope of this paper does not allow for a detailed explanation of Halliday's framework, Table 1 offers a simplified overview of the individual categories and sub-categories, participants' roles, and illustrative examples. For more detail, see Halliday's original work (1994) or Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), and for the application of SFG in stylistics, see e.g. Toolan (2013), Simpson and Montgomery (1995), Jeffries and McIntyre (2010).

Table 1 Transitivity categories adapted from Halliday (1994)

Main Category	Sub-category	Participants' Roles (and examples)	
Material		Actor Goal	
		He is walking the dog.	
Mental	Perception	Senser Phenomenon	
		I can hear you.	
	Affection	*He doesn't like her/playing basketball.*	
	Cognition	*He didn't know it.*	
Relational	Intensive	modes: Attributive	Identifying
		Carrier-Attribute	Identified-Identifier
		She is a teacher.	*Tom is the leader*
	Circumstantial	*The event is on Tuesday.*	*Tomorrow is 1st of May.*
	Possessive	*She has got a piano.*	*The piano is hers.*
Behavioural		Behaver	
		He was laughing.	
Verbal		Sayer-Receiver + Verbiage	
		My mum told me the truth.	
Existential		Existent	
		There are some oranges (on the table).	

To aid comprehension, the participants' roles are indicated by different underlines. In some cases, only one participant appears (e.g. in the behavioural process, there is only the behaver), or more than two participants are uttered (e.g. in the verbal process in which the direct object *the truth* represents the verbiage). Of course, circumstances can

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be added to any of these process types, such as the circumstance found in the example of the existential process indicated in brackets.

While Halliday (1994) speaks about six major processes, in visual communication Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify two major types of representations, that is narrative and conceptual representations. These two categories further work with several action types, some of which correspond with Halliday's processes, while others are specific to visual communication and do not have an equivalent in language. Table 2 offers a simplified overview of the visual SFG. It includes just some of the major processes and their description, and what kind of role the participants can perform.

Table 2 Visual representation adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

Main Category	Processes (and examples)		Participants' Roles
Narrative	Action	'doing or happening'	Actor-Goal
	Reaction	'looking'	Reacter-Phenomenon
	Speech	'speaking'	Speaker
	Mental	'thinking'	Senser
	Conversion	'natural processes, e.g. food chain diagrams'	-
Conceptual	Classificational	'taxonomy of participants'	Superordinates, Subordinates
	Analytical	'consist of and /or in'	Carrier-Attributes
	Symbolic	'convention based'	Carrier-Attributes

The basic difference between the two major categories is in the presence of what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 46) call a *vector*. Vectors are not depicted, but they are present in an image as a way "in which objects, and their relations to other objects and to processes, can be represented" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 42). While narrative representations always have a vector, conceptual ones do not have it. The narrative representation "serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59), and thus this type of representation can be seen as action-oriented, since an image with this type of representation conveys a kind of action that can be verbalized in terms of action verbs. Vectors in this type of representation are courses or directions which indicate a type of action that comes from one participant or an object and that is targeted at the same or another participant/object depicted or to someone or something that can be outside the boundary of an image. Unlike the narrative representation, the conceptual representation is more participant-oriented because there is hardly any 'happening going on'. What is depicted are participants that are represented "in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, or structure or meaning" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 79). A picture can include several processes at the same time, and thus a process can be embedded in another process. For instance, a phenomenon can be realized as an action process that is embedded in the major reactional process.

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In terms of the fusion of Halliday's and Kress and van Leeuwen's framework in a word-image text, Motta-Roth and Nascimento (2009, p. 324) argue that Halliday's material processes are realized as narrative representations in visual grammar "because both serve to represent 'outer experiences' in the material world" (Motta-Roth and Nascimento, 2009, p. 324, original single quotation marks), and relational and existential processes correspond with conceptual representations in visual grammar "because all of them are about 'being and having'" (Motta-Roth and Nascimento, 2009, p. 324, original single quotation marks). It is important to realize that words and pictures in a picturebook narrative do not have to represent the same things, because as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 76) explain they can "represent the world quite differently, allowing the development of the different epistemologies". This means that both words and pictures have the potential to provide different pieces of information about the characters involved in a story, and these pieces of information have an impact on how the reader learns about the character.

Following O'Halloran et al. (2019, p. 447, original capitals) the major difference in terms of visual and language participants is that "in text, someone (or something) can be a Participant in only one Process at a time, while in a photograph the same person or thing can be a Participant in a number of Processes simultaneously". In other words, a participant expressed in language performs only one role, because of the temporal, linear character of language, while a participant visualized in an image can perform more roles at the same time, because of the spatial dimension of a picture. However, this is not the difference the paper is interested in; rather it focuses on the meaning-making potential that each of the semiotic codes projects into the characterization.

[3]   Methodology

To understand how language and visual transitivity participates in characterization, the analysis was conducted in the following way. First, verbal (language) transitivity was considered. Attention was paid to both main and subordinate clauses, and within the subordinate clauses to both finite and non-finite verb phrases. Since it is a lexical verb and its contextual aspect that determine the type of transitivity process, all lexical verbs were analyzed in terms of the process types they represent within the narrative, and the roles of the participants involved in these processes were identified. Special attention was paid to those processes in which the three major characters are engaged, and their individual roles in the individual processes were studied. Second, the visual transitivity was investigated. The individual pictures were studied in terms of narrative and conceptual representations, which means that it was taken into consideration whether what is happening in the picture is driven by a vector or not, or whether the 'essence' of the participant/object depicted predominates in the visual text. Accordingly, the individual narrative and conceptual actions and the roles related to them were identified. Again, special attention was paid to those pictures in which the major characters are depicted. Third, the findings from verbal and visual transitivity were compared and discussed in terms of how they complement the characters and their mutual relationship.

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[4]   Analysis

The results below provide the major aspects of the interplay between verbal and visual transitivities as they construct the three major characters and their relationships. The direct quotes are not acknowledged, since all of them are taken from Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* 1963 edition, which is not paginated.

[4.1] Mother

Since the character of the mother is not visualized but only verbalized, the system of transitivity can be traced only in verbal processes, not in visual representations. The only process in which she acts as an explicit doer is her role of a sayer in the verbal process in "his mother called him 'Wild Thing!'". This is the first and also the only instance when the narrator refers to this parental figure with the definite noun phrase *his mother*, and it appears in the very first sentence of the narrative. Regarding its grammatical structure, this verbal process represents the main clause, which is preceded by the definite noun phrase "the night", which is postmodified by a defining relative clause in which the major protagonist of the narrative is introduced. In other words, Max as a doer is introduced as a circumstance that accompanies the main clause in which his mother acts as a doer. This main clause is followed by another main clause in which the mother acts as a goal in Max's direct speech: "'I'LL EAT YOU UP!'", and as an implied actor or sayer in the next subordinate clause "so he was sent to bed without eating anything". Even though it is not explicitly stated who ordered Max to go to sleep, it might be assumed that it is the mother, because of her and Max's interaction that precedes this adverbial clause of purpose.

The last mention of the character of the mother occurs at the end of the narrative. In the circumstance "[he wanted to be] where someone loved him best of all", which specifies the place of Max's mental process of cognition (*wanted to be*), the choice of the indefinite pronoun (*someone*) is meant to refer to a doer that is able to perform the mental process of affection, i.e. loving. The choice of the indefinite pronoun *someone* signifies Max's stance towards the conflict from the beginning of the story. Max is still a bit angry with his mother because she has sent him to bed without supper. His irritation does not allow him to refer to her directly. At the same time, *someone* in the subject position causes the character of the mother to be perceived as an important doer here – as someone who can justify Max's longing for love. In other words, the choice of the indefinite reference to his mother in the subject position reflects Max's current ambivalent stance towards her.

Even though the character of the mother does not appear in any of the pictures, there are nevertheless certain 'traces' of her participation. She acts as an absent phenomenon, i.e. as a participant at which Max stares at but who is not visualized. This image of Max as a reacter who stares at the missing phenomenon, which implies his mother, follows their verbal interaction that results in Max's punishment. The other picture that indicates her presence is the very last one, in which Max is back in his room and the supper is on the table. A glass of milk, a bowl with a spoon and a piece of cake suggest that it

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was his mother who prepared the supper and brought it to his room. However, there is no narrative representation of the mother visualized in these actions. It is thus left up to the reader to fill in the actor of this act of reconciliation.

[4.2] Wild Things

As far as the characters of Max's imagination are concerned, Sendak uses the rather vague expression *wild things* in reference to them. The semantic property of the word *thing* does not include any aspect of a living creature. On the contrary, it suggests something inanimate, stable and immobile. However, by describing their physiognomic aspects (such as the sound they make, plus the reference to their teeth, claws and eyes), the narrator admits that they are animate. Their animalism is also signified by the attribute *wild*. In fact, the phrase *wild things* works with an oxymoronic relation between the qualitative adjective combined with the vague noun head. The visual code depicts them as half-animals and half-humans, as they walk on two legs, they can speak human language, and one of them seems to wear a pullover. Even though the wild things are gigantic in comparison to Max, their curved shapes and rounded bodies cause them to be perceived as rather adorable and cute (Nodelman, 1988, p. 127). The language that is used for their characterization seems to invoke fear and anxiety: "they [wild things] roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws". The visual adorability and the verbal fearfulness establish an ironic relation, because the wild things "contradict the implications of the text" (Nodelman, 1988, p. 227). And this is where the transitivity can explain the ironic, yet still complementary characterization of the wild things. The wild things are presented as behavers that consciously perform the behavioural processes of 'roaring, 'gnashing', 'rolling' and 'showing'. The anxiety and fear associated with these physiological actions are underlined by the direct objects. These take the form of a noun phrase with the structure of a possessive pronoun, the descriptive modifier *terrible* and the head that refers to a particular body part of the wild things. They show off their physiognomy, probably to construe an identity of a dangerous creature. On the other hand, nothing is said about who or what is supposed to be scared by them. This is implied in the visual text of the narrative. A double page spread shows an image of a couple of wild things that are walking towards Max, moving from the right side of the picture to the left, where Max is still on board his little boat. The image works with the actional process of narrative representation, in which both the wild things as well as Max are involved in a transactional process with two actors and two goals. The first actor is represented by the group of wild things, whose vector is formed by the direction of their movement, and the goal of their walking is Max. Even though Max is located aboard the boat, and seems just to look at the wild things, he (together with his boat, with a pointed flag at the top of the mast and a pointed bowsprit) form a vector directed at the wild things. Since the first wild thing in the row is very close to the pointed spike of the bowsprit, it is rather Max's boat that looks dangerous, not the creatures. Moreover, Max wears a white wolf costume with a number of pointed parts,

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such as whiskers, ears or claws. These sharp objects contrast with the rounded bodily parts of the wild things. The wild things perform a behavioural process verbally, which is visualized as an action process. At the same time, they are depicted as the goal of Max's visual action. However, since Max and his boat are depicted with more pointed objects, while the wild things have curved shapes, the visual fear is rather associated with Max, while the verbal fear is associated with the wild things. The fact that Max is to be feared is further developed when he becomes the king of all the wild things.

Besides the behaver, the other roles the wild things perform in the verbal text are that of a sayer ("the wild things cried"), an actor ("we'll eat you up"), as well as a goal ("he tamed them"), a senser ("we love you so"), a carrier ("they were frightened"), and an existent ("where the wild things are"). In the visual text, however, the wild things are rather depicted as actors involved in an action process. In the three consecutive spreads in which the wild rumpus is visualized, but no verbal text is provided, both Max and the wild things act as one actor in a number of processes of 'dancing', 'jumping', or 'hanging', as well as mental and verbal ones such as 'howling' or 'singing' (for more detail, see Nodelman, 1988, pp. 161–162 and pp. 169–170).

Contrary to what is said in the verbal text, one of the wild things is visualized as an actor whose vector causes Max to land on the wild things' island. The image that visualizes this narrative representation shows a wild thing that is situated on the left, and a puff of air that comes out of its nostrils causes Max's boat to fly onto the land of the wild things. Even though the verbal text states that it was Max who sailed to "where the wild things are", which makes Max an an actor in a material process accompanied with an adverbial circumstance, the visual text reveals that it is a wild thing that 'sails' Max to this particular place. In other words, Max is not the one that steers the rudder to the land. He is aboard, trying to protect his face while being a goal of the wild thing's action.

To sum up, the wild things are depicted as doers, as they direct Max to their homeland, 'welcome' him and crown him, and last but not least join Max in the wild rumpus. The verbal wild things, on the other hand, are rather described as 'done-to' participants, and Max as the one who does things to them. It is him who tames them and who punishes them in the same way his mother did to him. Additionally, they are behavers whose physiological processes are to be perceived as invoking fear, but this fear is diminished by the image of curved shapes and rounded bodies.

[4.3] Max

The major protagonist, Max, is depicted in each picture of the story, and is mentioned in almost each sentence. In the visual text, he is predominantly represented as an actor in action processes, while in the verbal text he takes several roles. The prevailing verbal process is the material one. In these material processes, Max initiates an action specified in a finite verb phrase, e.g. "made mischief", "sailed off", "came", "tamed", etc. This makes him the most active character in the story. However, we can find certain shifts in the negotiation of his role of an actor in the visual and verbal texts. The narrator's rather

vague and general reference "made mischief of one kind and another" is concretized in two consecutive images. In the first, Max is building a shelter, and in the other, he is hunting his pet dog. Even though role-playing belongs to the repertoire of children's games, what is striking here is the anomalous reality of the playing. Max is just about to nail a real nail into the wall with a real hammer to fix a rope that holds the shelter, and in the next picture he is depicted in the middle of jumping off a staircase, with a real fork in his left hand and with his right hand as if snatching the dog that Max is chasing. He does not play with toys, but with real things, which might result in real damage and injury. His way of playing goes far beyond what is normal and conventionally appropriate. To underline the inappropriateness of his misbehaviour, both images offer a more complex scene. In the first picture we can recognize that Max had already done mischief to the teddy bear that is hung by one limb down the rope whose other end Max wants to fix to the wall. While the teddy bear is positioned on the left side of the picture, Max, as a new piece of information being introduced into the story, is positioned on the right side. In the picture that follows, Max is again situated on the right side, while the dog is on the left. To interpret this scene, we have to read from right to left, giving 'Max is chasing the dog'. In the case of left-to-right reading, 'the dog is chased by Max', the actor and the goal remain the same. Following Kress and van Leeuwen's distinction (2006, pp. 179–185) between given and new information, Max again represents a new piece of information despite the fact that he is a new piece of information in the preceding picture. What is new here is the gradation of Max's mischief; while in the first picture he seems to cause damage 'just' to the wall, in the next one, he seems to be determined to cause damage to a living animal. The verbal portion of the narrative, however, refers to this inappropriate act as "and another [mischief]" without any further evaluation. Not only does the visual transitivity concretize the verbal transitivity, but it also extends it beyond the social conventions of what is appropriate and acceptable in a child's innocent game. At this stage of the narrative, the visual Max is to be perceived as a very naughty boy. To sum up these two pictures and the first clause of the narrative, it can be said that the character of Max is verbalized as an actor in inexplicit misbehavior, but is visualized as a character who can be violent and cruel, which is also underlined by his wolf costume.

Max's other verbal material processes do not communicate any mischief, but rather communicate his locomotion ("he sailed off", "he came to the place" and "he sailed back") and his gaining of power ("he tamed them", "he sent the wild things off to bed"). Considering the locomotion, however, the visual text slightly shifts the meaning of the extent to which Max initiates and performs these actions. Instead of doing the actual sailing, the image shows Max standing or being aboard, his right arm akimbo and his left arm leaning on the edge of the boat. Moreover, he looks directly at the reader, not ahead in the direction in which the boat is moving. What happens here is that the character breaks the narrative to speak or rather to look directly at the reader, as if checking whether the reader is following the story carefully. The visual Max does not correspond with the verbal one. As discussed above, it is one of the wild things that directs his boat to the wild things' island. Therefore, the visual transitivity in the image of a wild thing modifies

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the verbal material process conveyed in the narrator's "he came to where the wild things are". Max is not depicted as an actor of the material process of sailing, but rather as a goal, since the process of sailing is done to him, not by him. Simultaneously, he is involved in a conceptual representation, namely in the symbolic suggestive process in which he is a carrier to whom the quality of being satisfied is assigned. This is in contrast with the stage during which he is furious with his mother.

He further acts as a senser in the mental processes of cognition ("he wanted to be") and of perception ("he smelled good things to eat"), as well as in an intensive relational process in which he is a carrier that carries the attribute of being lonely ("Max the king of all wild things was lonely"). Immediately after the rumpus, the character of Max shifts from the role of an actor ("he sent the wild things off to bed without their supper") to a senser and carrier in the verbal code. This shift from the role of an actor to a non-actor is also visible in the visual code. In this particular scene, he is depicted on the right side of the double-page spread, thus occupying the position of a new piece of information. What is new about Max here is that a different trait of his personality is visualized. So far, Max has been predominantly visualized as an actor, especially in those actions that are perceived as inappropriate. In this picture, he is depicted as a tired, sad and lonely boy despite the company of the wild things.

Considering the visual text, another role which Max performs and which is not provided in the verbal transitivity is the role of a reacter. The reason why Max 'escapes' to where the wild things are is the conflict with his mother. What the visual text offers is his immediate reaction to being sent to his bedroom. This is realized in the image of Max who is located in his bedroom, staring in an exasperated way at the closed door with his left arm akimbo. He is furious because he has no control over the situation. The only thing he can do is to obey his mother's orders. As Painter et al. (2014, p. 32) explain, Max's facial expression as well as his gestures and bodily postures convey the affect he is experiencing. The verbal text, however, does not provide any information about Max's inner feelings. The image shows Max as the reacter, and what is missing in the visual portion is the phenomenon, his mother. This visual reactional process embeds what in Halliday's terms is known as the mental process of affection (he seems to hate his mother at that very moment) as well as the intensive relational process (he is furious). As a result, this picture builds not only on the narrative representation of a reactional process, but also on the conceptual representation of the symbolic attributive process that conveys the concept of being upset and angry with his mother.

This image also represents a turning point in the spatial setting of the narrative. After the conflict, Max's room changes into a forest through which he escapes his home, finds a boat and sets out on a voyage. This spatial change is provided on three consecutive double-page spreads, both in words and pictures. The furniture as well as the room itself are transformed into the outdoors. As far as the character of Max is concerned, he is neither visualized nor verbalized as an actor of this changing process, but as somebody who happens to be there. The verbal transitivity shifts Max into the position of a premodifying element: "the very night in Max's room". Max is no longer ascribed any role,

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neither doer nor done-to participant, but rather he is positioned into a circumstance. What is accentuated in the visual transitivity are his feelings, which gradually change from anger to happiness. His inner feelings are predominantly communicated by his lips and eyes, but what is also noticeable is the way the whiskers of his wolf costume change. In the reactional process with his left arm akimbo, both corners of his lips turn downwards, and so do the whiskers in a very straight way. However, in the next picture, when his eyes are closed and his mouth is curved with one of the lips higher than the other, his whiskers are less straight, and more curved. This suggests a relief from the anger that he felt immediately after being sent to his bedroom. In the last picture of his bedroom's transformation into a forest, he has a broad smile on his face, his hand partly overlaps his mouth, his eyes are still closed and his whiskers are still curved, but a little bit more than in the preceding picture. The sequence of these three pictures foregrounds the change of Max's inner feelings, because this inner change happens simultaneously with the verbal behavioural process communicated by the narrator's "a forest grew and grew and grew". Moreover, the whole transformation scene is achieved by changing the size of the illustration, from not filling the whole page to occupying the entire right page of the double-page spread. What also underlines the change of Max's inner state and the environment of his home is that a framed picture becomes an unframed one. This is a very peculiar moment of the narrative. The plot does not develop, but the space develops, so it appears that the setting, i.e. the place where the plot is happening, becomes an important participant, so that things do not seem to be happening in time, but only in space. Within the context of the story, this is a moment at which Max does not do anything; he only happens to be present at this spatial transformation. Moreover, the image of the forest that grows in Max's room can be also interpreted as a symbolic suggestive process, since it is meant to communicate Max's escape from the real world, represented by his bedroom, to the world of his imagination, represented by the wild things' land.

[5] Conclusion

The paper analyzes the system of verbal and visual transitivities in their construction of the characters of Max, his mother and the wild things in Maurice Sendak's picturebook *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963). The paper focuses on which processes the characters are engaged in, which roles they play in these processes, and how the processes and the assigned roles are verbalized and/or visualized. The main analytical framework is based on Halliday's systemic functional grammar and its extension into visual communication as introduced by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006).

The analysis has found that the narrative representation is mingled with the conceptual representation. This is not unusual, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 95) admit that "[t]he categories of visual grammar do not have clear-cut edges, and specific representations can merge two or more structures – for instance, the narrative and the analytical". A peculiar stage in the narrative development appears at the moment when Max's bedroom changes into a forest. In three consecutive double-page spreads, the con-

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ceptual representation of the character of Max takes over the narrative representation. The conceptual representation focuses on how Max deals with his humiliation. The narrative representation does not disappear at this particular moment, since Max's legs show movement in a particular direction. As soon as the transformation starts, Max's bedroom becomes a participant, namely the carrier of the possessive attributes of trees and bushes. In this sense, the consecutive images work with the conceptual representation of a spatial analytical process. As a result, the conceptual representation of both Max and his bedroom seems to slow down the narrative, but the verbal transitivity ensures that the story itself develops in a steady, rhythmical way.

As far as the characters of the wild things and Max are concerned, there is a contrast in how they are introduced to the reader visually and how they are introduced verbally. While words are supposed to build an image of a dangerous character when the wild things appear on the scene, their visual image, especially the means of visual transitivity realized by the curved and rounded shapes of their bodies, mitigate (or rather overshadow) the impact of the verbal transitivity. In the case of Max, however, it is the other way around. The verbal transitivity exploits a vague noun phrase ("mischief of one kind and another") that constructs an image of an ordinary boy without any further specification of his misbehaviour. The visual transitivity, which is realized by vectors, the image layout and pointed objects, concretizes Max's inappropriate deeds, which might be interpreted as cruel and dangerous. When he meets the wild things, the visual transitivity accentuates his potential cruelty. However, this is mitigated by the manner in which Max manages to tame the wild things ("by staring into their yellow eyes without blinking once"). This verbal behavioural process suggests that no physical strength is needed to become the wild things' king. Once Max and the wild things are engaged in the wild rumpus, the visual text dominates the narrative and provides both narrative and conceptual representations that nonetheless indicate Max's superior position within the community. After the rumpus, the verbal Max performs the direct act of executing his superior power, which resonates with his mother's position in their child-parent relationship. This is the moment when the narrative pattern is stopped, as both visual and verbal transitivity builds an identity of a sensitive character. The visual transitivity employs the conceptual representation that displays Max as a new piece of information, and the symbolic attributive action expresses his feelings. The verbal transitivity is realized by an intensive relational process in an attributive mode ("was lonely"). This is the very first moment of the narrative in which the means of both visual and verbal transitivity build the same image of the character of Max.

As far as Max's relation with his mother is concerned, this is communicated by both words and pictures, which are combined in such a way that enables the narrator to reveal the individual stages that Max goes through – that is, from humiliation, through rage, to reconciliation. Max's mother, who is not visualized, is implied as a phenomenon in the picture in which Max stares at the closed door of his bedroom. Max's affective gaze, the straight lines of his whiskers and the pointed shapes of his costume, as well as his unfriendly posture, communicate his rage, while the mother's emotional state is neither

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depicted nor verbalized. Another implied visual reference to the mother appears in the
very last picture, in which the supper on Max's table indicates that it was her who made
the supper. The narrator's verbal transitivity conveys Max's behavioural process ("where
he found supper waiting for him") and the relational intensive process in the attributive
mode connected to the supper ("it was still hot"). The picture shows Max walking slowly
towards the table with the hood of his costume down. This conceptual representation of
symbolic suggestive action (the hood down) and the picture composition (Max is posi-
tioned on the right side of the picture) indicate that Max's playtime is over, and his smile
suggests that he has forgiven his mother. It might be concluded that the formation of
Max's personality is achieved via the interplay between the means of both verbal and
visual transitivities. In this sense, the dynamic relation between these transitivities can
be understood as an effective means of characterization in picturebook narratives. This,
of course, is a question explored by semiotic studies of diverse picturebook narratives.

The paper endeavours to illustrate that in a multimodal text, the system of transi-
tivity can serve as a useful device for characterization. The means of verbal transitivity
are represented by the lexical verbs found in the finite phrases. The semantic property
of a verb and the role related to this process are determined by the position the character
occupies in the verb's valency pattern. The construction of a character's identity is thus
built on the lexico-grammatical structure of the language. Considering the visual mode,
however, the process of characterization is more complicated. The vectors determine the
roles that the characters are meant to represent, and at the same time, they convey the
narrative aspect in terms of actions. The composition of a page, i.e. where the objects and
characters are placed, as well as the shapes of objects and figures, including the shapes of
their bodily parts, are meant to convey the conceptual representation. Their combina-
tion with the verbal transitivity supports the dynamic relation between verbal and visual
characterization that unfolds throughout the entire story. This dynamicity is achieved
by the frequent position of Max on the right side of the image, which is meant to convey
new pieces of information about the development of his character, by the absence of his
mother in the visual text and by the omitted and indefinite references to her character
in the verbal text. In this study, not all the means of visual transitivity are discussed in
detail, and thus more investigation needs to be done in terms of colours, hues and satu-
ration, as well as techniques of drawing.

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