TOWARDS A VOCABULARY FOR VISUAL ANALYSIS: USING PICTURE BOOKS TO DEVELOP VISUAL LITERACY WITH PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This article brings together the connectedness between words and images. It discusses the increasing impact of semiotics in the field of children's literature as well as the way children are thinking and living in the 21st century. The present literacy landscape demands that teachers understand multimodal texts and are able to interpret and teach these texts. A central aim of psychology and education is to develop an understanding of how children learn and how to present teaching materials in ways to help children learn. Using visual material does not mean that all visually composed teaching materials will necessarily lead to understanding. Visual literacy skills must be taught, especially in diverse environments where every child brings to the class his/her own cultural experiences. Using picture books with diverse beginner readers needs clear and specific principles to be able to critically interpret the interaction between text and images. The article explores the integration of text and images through Preller's picture book *Babalela* (2000), illustrated by Andries and Erica Maritz. To explore visual literacy skills, Lohr's (2008) principles, actions and tools (PAT) design framework will be used to analyse the picture book in order to understand the visual sign system and how the visual and the written text interact to create meaning. This knowledge will enable pre-service teachers and in-service teachers to build a vocabulary for visual analysis and to develop critical reading skills, 'which is essential for any sort of critical thinking in the 21st century' (Burmark 2002:v).

KEYWORDS

multimodal texts, picture books, interpretation, meaning making, visual literacy, principles, tools and actions in visual design

1   INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, as in other African countries, most children are not acquainted with books and stories before they go to school. In Kenya, for example, people have to be forced to read; they do not read books for pleasure (Commeyras & Inyega 2007:258). In South Africa, poverty makes the purchasing of books a luxury; therefore, few children are acquainted with books before they start formal schooling (Hibbert & Crous 2011:100). When they arrive in Grade one, they not only encounter books to read, but they have to be able to read words and images, and critically evaluate the multimodal messages they will encounter more and more. Hence, teachers should make an effort to develop a more explicit understanding of the meaning attached to elements of visual literacy, such as colour, line, shape and how these elements interact with visual and multimodal texts (Callow 2008:617).

The goal of the current article is to outline the beginnings of a shared visual literacy vocabulary that teachers of beginning readers can draw on to evaluate the role issues of design play in eliciting response to visual text. Children's literature is characterised by the use of visual elements. Picture books are ideal to use in this regard. Until recently, the analysis of picture books was divided into two separate categories: one carried out by art historians; and the other by children's literature experts. The first focused on graphic design aspects; while the latter treated picture books as any other literary book. However, both disregarded the importance of the text/image interaction (Nikolajeva 2004:235).

I will use Preller's *Babalela* (2000), a well-known, popular Afrikaans picture book, to illustrate the interaction between words and images through an explorative use of a graphic design framework. I am not saying that this is the only way to analyse picture books visually, nor do I regard this as taking precedence over other visual elements. In my experience as a lecturer of pre-service teachers, I have found that some students lack critical knowledge regarding children's literature, especially picture books, as well as critical skills in teaching visual literacy. I will explore the interaction between text and images to create meaning through the implementation of Lohr's (2008) principles, actions and tools (PAT) design framework to assist in-service teachers and pre-service teachers in this regard.

2   THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

2.1   MULTIMODAL TEXTS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

The digital media has reconfigured the communicative landscape; therefore, the ability to encode and decode printed text is no longer sufficient (Connors 2011:74). The range of digital media children use to represent their thoughts and lives is the main reason why the ability to communicate effectively should entail multiliteracy, especially visual

literacy. Young children today are growing up in a digital world. They are able to use iPods, televisions, cellular phones and other devices even before they go to school. Therefore, these children, as well as pre-service teachers, assume that they are visually literate. According to Burmark (2002:v), this assumption is wrong, since visual literacy is a 'learned skill, not an intuitive one'. The techniques used to create images; to learn the vocabulary of shapes and colours; and to identify the characteristics of an image that give it meaning, must all be learned.

Multimodal texts are, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001:20), 'the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined'. Picture books are a form of multimodal literature and have several advantages, namely, they can stimulate children's cognitive processes of perception, memory, reasoning, reflection and insight (Norton 2011:10), thereby teaching children how to evaluate a text critically. There is a wide range of research showing the advantages of using children's literature, including picture books, in the teaching of literacy (eg, Arizpe & Styles 2008:363; Kiefer 1995:278; Norton 2011:15; Sipe 2008:131). The changing of a mode of written language to a multimodal text requires new skills and strategies for constructing meaning.

Picture books hold several advantages for learners who are either learning an additional language or are being taught through a medium that is not their vernacular. Gregory (1994) shows how picture books can play an important role in the way bilingual children construct and negotiate meaning in a new language and how the picture book genre invites interaction with texts. Coulthard (2003) builds on the work of Gregory and notes that multilingual children are stimulated by picture books to profound meaning making and overcome their hesitation to talk. Another researcher, Colledge (2005:24), concludes that picture books form a bridge between the known culture and the unfamiliar culture.

2.2 THE TEXT/IMAGES INTERACTION IN PICTURE BOOKS

To define picture books is not an easy task. According to Arizpe and Styles (2003:19), Bader (1976) offers a succinct definition:

> A picturebook is a text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page.

In picture books the text and the pictures are inseparable and of equal importance in the forming of meaning (Arizpe & Styles 2003:22; Martinez & Harmon 2012:323). Picture books can be categorised into alphabet books, counting books, concept books, wordless picture books, toy books, pop-up books, easy-to-read books, picture storybooks, postmodern picture books or non-fiction books (Johnson 2009:79; Kiefer 2008:375).

Nikolajeva and Scott (2000:225) identify five categories of interaction between text and images, namely: (1) a *symmetrical* picture book where the words and the pictures have a virtual equivalence; (2) a *complementary* picture book that has words and pictures which contribute to one story; (3) an *expanding* or *enhancing* picture book that has a visual narrative supporting the verbal narrative, and, in turn, a verbal narrative that depends on the visual narrative, and extend each other's meaning; (4) a *counterpoint* picture book where the words and pictures tell different stories; and (5) a *selleptic* (contradiction) picture book where the words and pictures contradict each other. *Babalela* is a *complementary* picture book where the words and illustrations contribute to the one story, filling the gaps, as well as an *enhancing* picture book.

Every feature in a picture book is important and conveys meaning (Nikolajeva & Scott 2000; Sipe 2008:134). The pictures and the text must work together and interact in the creation of setting; characterisation; narrative perspective; time and movement; mimesis and modality (literal and symbolic representation); figurative language; metafiction; intertext (ways that picture books play with expectations about pictures and words); and picture books paratexts (covers, endpapers). The principles, actions and tools used in visual design are important aspects that are embedded in the illustrations. The interpretation of the words and illustrations enhances children's critical thinking, inference-making, and visual literacy.

2.3 USING VISUAL DESIGN BASICS TO INTERPRET VISUAL INFORMATION

The aim of the article is to develop pre-service teachers' basic visual literacy vocabulary, comprehension and critical reading abilities and to show how the relationship between words and images can make meaning. Although pre-service teachers can usually decode texts and use comprehension strategies, they are not so apt at addressing aspects of visual literacy or at focusing on the semiotic relationship between text and illustrations.

To achieve the above-mentioned aim I will explore utilising the design framework proposed by Lohr (2008) in the analysis of Preller's picture book *Babalela* (2000). Lohr's (2008) framework uses basic concepts of visual design, namely, principles, actions and tools, to show that visuals and words facilitate learning when information is meaningfully selected, organised and integrated. This framework is known as the PAT design framework.

Visual design, in a picture book, is used to interpret the author's comprehension of the words and to communicate this comprehension in a nonverbal way. Illustrations often 'carry deeper and more subtle connotations portrayed through choice of colour, tone, media, or style' (O'Neil 2011:214). For the purpose of the current article, the three main concepts of the PAT design framework have to be combined in order to interpret images. These concepts are *principles, actions* and *tools* and will subsequently be discussed.

2.3.1   Principles

The first concept *principles* consists of selection, organisation and integration. The s*election principle* describes the focusing of attention and is conveyed through figure (where learners are paying attention to specific and selective information) and ground (the information the learners are not paying attention to, ie, background information). The figure-ground distinctions need to be as clear as possible in order to focus the learner's attention onto the most important information.

The *organisation principle* is explained through the hierarchy of sequence in a specific order to enhance the remembering of information. This hierarchy is created by using tools and actions (explained further in the article) as clues or pathways to direct the eye towards certain information (Lohr 2008:66). There are three steps in creating hierarchy to enhance children's perception of image.

Firstly, chunking the information by clustering it. In picture books the author can manipulate the information with white space (explained further in the article) to create equal perception of the big picture and focus on detail. When the field is large and the image is small, the learner is more likely to notice the big picture. When the field is small and the image is large, the learner will most likely pay attention to the detail (Lohr 2008:126).

Secondly, different levels of information are used for stratifying information (Lohr 2008:122). Instead of numbers and letters, these levels can be created using tools, such as type, shape, depth, colour and space, and actions, for example contrast, alignment, repetition, and proximity. These levels focus attention on information from the most to the least important. These layers provide pathways to the information that must be looked at first (Lohr 2008:123), for example by using the white space in an image to create an equal perception of the big picture and detail (Lohr 2008:126).

The third step in creating hierarchy to enhance children's perception of image is by organising the information on vertical, horizontal or diagonal planes. The top part of a plane is perceived as high, powerful, valuable, rare, light and primary. Low positions have properties of darkness, earthy, heavy, common and secondary in value. If the planes are vertical, the left-hand side is likely to be associated with cause, problem, crude and before; while the right side will be associated with effect, solution, refined and after. The top part of a diagonal alignment can be interpreted as advantageous, far or symbolising the unknown. The bottom part can be interpreted as near, familiar and involved (Lohr 2008:128).

The *integration principle* captures the way the entire picture is combined on the page. It has to do with the composition of the actions and tools to create balance, using metaphors and symbols. There are four possibilities:

- closure – where the reader sees the whole/entire picture;

- contiguity – where the human mind seeks to follow a path, even if it is broken;
- similarity – where consistency is created through alignment, repetition, colour, or shapes;
- proximity – where items are grouped either together or away from each other.

These principles enhance the learner's perception of the hierarchy of an image (Lohr 2008:124). The enablement of the principles depends on the actions and tools that are used.

2.3.2   Actions

Actions form the second concept of the PAT design framework, and they are the changes or movement to the information to convey the idea. The actions concept consists of four elements, namely, contrast, alignment, repetition and proximity. These four actions (see Table 1) do not need to be used together or simultaneously (Lohr 2008:80). *Contrast* is an especially important element in graphic design, and crucial for communicating an idea (Peterson 2003:94). Contrast can be formed through values and colours (such as black or white, and thin or bold), shapes and typography (such as squares or dots, and capital letters or small letters), and texture (hard edge or soft flowing, or the medium used). *Alignment* tends to group items perceptually. Placing information along an edge or an imaginary line gives easier access to the information and navigates the eye in a specific direction. There are various types of alignment – from vertical to circular to centre. In a text the words should be left-aligned for easier reading (in western cultures). *Repetition* is employed when an item is repeated many times. It creates a sense of harmony and unity and could be used to emphasise the message or a meaning. *Proximity* involves moving visual items either closer together or further apart. The closer the items are, the more related they seem. The further apart they are, the more unrelated they seem. These actions influence a reader's perception. Actions can be manipulated by using tools, which will be discussed next.

Table 1: Actions in graphic design

Contrast	Alignment
Manipulate and differentiate through size, colour, shape or line.	Group elements into chunks to line up on various edges or imaginary lines. Different alignments such as right, left, centred, bottom, top, vertical, horizontal, circular. In western cultures left-alignment works best.
Repetition	**Proximity**
Repeat information through colour, depth, line, shape, and space to create associations or chunks. Create a sense of harmony and unity.	Create contiguity by placing corresponding words and pictures near each other or further apart. The closer the items the more related they are. Separation relates to isolation or independence.

2.3.3 Tools

The third concept of the PAT design framework consists of *tools* to communicate visual and written information, namely, typography, shape, colour, depth and space. *Typography* or letterform can be perceived in various ways by the viewer (Peterson 2003:37). Typography can create different feelings, for example when the letterform is flowing and curvaceous, the feeling conveyed is softer than when the letterform is angular and hard-edged (Peterson 2003:37). The choice of typeface depends on the content of the text or single words. Children, who start to read for the first time, should be given texts with a typeface that reflects the typeface they have to use in writing.

Shape can be defined as 'any element that's used to give or determine form' (Peterson 2003:53). Shape can serve either to break up the picture into smaller segments or to separate and organise (Peterson 2003:54).

Using *colour* as a design tool is largely a matter of taste (Peterson 2003:126). Colours can be divided into warm and cool colours. Warm tones lean to the red, orange and yellow side of the colour spectrum, while cool tones lean to the green, blue and purple side. The symbolic meaning of colours is culturally embedded. For example, in the Western culture, white is associated with purity or holiness, but in Eastern cultures, white is associated with death and mourning.

Depth refers to scale, dimension and texture (Lohr 2008:270). Depth differentiates between background and foreground, thus, putting objects closer makes them bigger, while making objects smaller, puts them in the background, or putting objects next to other objects can give a perspective of the size of the object. *Scale* refers to the proportions of objects and can be achieved through words, for example the font size, or the illustrations. *Dimension* can be achieved by means of shadows. *Texture* is created by the type of art medium used, for example water colour or pastels, but can be created by the use of brush type, such as dry strokes or soft wet strokes.

Space is a tool for clarifying text and has three instructionally related benefits (Lohr 2008:274). It increases the rate of reading because readers are able to see redundancies; it helps readers to access more relevant pieces of information; and it enables readers to see the structure of a text. Space is created through balance. In art balance can create a powerful mood (Peterson 2003:82). When items are placed in symmetry, they form an equal balance. If the lines that are formed in the illustration are not placed perfectly horizontally or vertically, they create an asymmetrical design and the balance is disturbed.

When children read or write in Western countries, they start from the left-hand top of the page. In illustrations the most important information must also be placed there. Placing items out of balance will immediately cause tension (Peterson 2003:85). Colour complements the space and can create contrast or sophistication. White space is challenging because it is hard to see, mainly because it forms the background colour. White space does not need to be the colour white; it can be any colour. On a page with black letters on a white background, the white background is the white space. Once the reader understands to look for the white space, it forms a separate visual element. Many learners prefer images and text passages that use a huge amount of white space because they feel less overwhelmed by the volume of information presented (Lohr 2008:275).

It should be clear from the discussion of the PAT design framework that the three concepts are interconnected and not isolated aspects. In a picture book the different concepts are used to interpret the words as well as the illustrations, accentuating the word/image interaction. Therefore, when applying the organisational principle, some of the actions and tools will be applied simultaneously. In the following section, this design will be used to analyse Preller's picture book *Babalela* (2000).

3 ANALYSIS OF *BABALELA* BASED ON THE PAT DESIGN FRAMEWORK

In short, *Babalela* is the story of a strange little creature, called Babalela, from a forest, who is discovered by man and taken away from his habitat. In his fury, Babalela succeeds in escaping and flies back to his forest where he lives happily again. To interpret this picture book the text and the pictures must be analysed as a unity because the meaning is conveyed both through words and pictures (Martens et al 2012:285; Martinez & Harmon 2012:323; O'Neil 2011:214; Prior, Willson & Martinez 2012:196). Each new page presents the reader with a new set of words and new illustrations to factor into the construction of meaning (Sipe 1998:106). I will discuss the picture book from the cover page to the end page.

Genette (1997:5) describes the peritext (such as cover page, endpapers, half-title and title page and dedication page) as the physical features within a book aside from the words, as features and conventions that enrich the picture book. Some of these features are found in every book, but in picture books these features provide aesthetic coherence to the entire book (Sipe & McGuire 2006:91). Pantaleo (2003:74) states that children learn peritextual vocabulary and use the information of the peritext to confirm their interpretations about characters, plot, setting and tone which contribute significantly to their appreciation and understanding of the book.

It is clear from the abovementioned that the different pages in a picture book consist of specific vocabulary of which pre-service teachers must take note to enable them to use the proper vocabulary and interpretation in teaching. When learners are taught

to understand the visual elements they are better able to interpret the illustrator's use of these devices when they encounter them in picture books (Prior et al 2012:196). Teachers as well as pre-service teachers should take note that they have to include the peritext as part of their vocabulary for visual analysis. Hence, I will include the peritext in the analysis of the picture book *Babalela*, starting from the cover page to the end page. The three concepts of the PAT design framework will be applied simultaneously and I will refer to the words in the text, showing the interaction, where applicable.

3.1   COVER PAGE

Due to the application of the selection principle the main character and the setting form a secure unity of items on the cover page. The reader's attention is drawn to the main character (on the foreground) with the forest (the setting) fading towards the top of the page, forming the background. The integration principle is used in the layout of the whole picture. Depth is created through the use of dimension, colour and texture. The overall arrangement of information chunks focuses the reader's attention on Babalela where he is placed vertically on the left-hand side on the cover page, facing the reader. The white of his huge eyes, together with the white space in the middle of the page, catches the reader's eye, focusing the attention on Babalela. The reader will probably notice the detail of Babalela first and then perhaps the background detail of the forest. The forest greens are arranged in a circle, implying a secure environment surrounding Babalela.

The information on the moral of the story is chunked on the images on the cover page. This creates a good figure-ground balance to help the reader enter a visual. The inside of the book should create pathways or layers through which the reader can travel by controlling the sequence in which information is displayed to lead to the moral of the story. In *Babalela*, the sequence of information is presented very clearly. This control is established through the organisation of the information on vertical, horizontal and diagonal planes; contrast, and perceiving relationships based on proximity.

The purple coloured character shows some resemblance to familiar features, but as a whole differs from anything in particular. It is not clear whether this little character is an animal, an insect or a reptile; thus arousing the reader's curiosity to read further. He is a creature that will appeal to the reader: huge, intelligent eyes, two big humanlike ears, two legs with feet without toes, and a tail. He places one foot on top of the other in a rather shy manner.

Colour can convey a certain mood. The purple colour of Babalela catches the reader's eye, and the white space in the middle of the top of the page, lures the reader into a feeling of interest, excitement and mystery. The mysteriousness is intensified through the use of the faded colour shades of the forest. The blue and green colours add a feeling of calmness and peacefulness. This correlates with the forest theme throughout the story.

Figure 1: Front cover of *Babalela*

On the title page of *Babalela*, the illustration of Babalela shows texture through the use of watercolour creating various shades of purple for the fur on his skin (the lines on his head, arms, tummy, legs and feet as well as his tail). On pages 25 and 26, his little wings are spread wide open, creating the illusion of the fragile, transparent wings of an insect such as a dragonfly. This texture is created by the high value of purple and the blue of the circles on the wings, together with a large number of white spaces.

Colour is the interpretation of light which is created in the human eye. Colour content can be examined through three elements, namely: *hue*, *value* and *saturation*. A *hue* is a specific wavelength that the human eye perceives as colour, such as red, blue and green. When an artist uses colour, two qualities must be considered, namely: value and saturation. *Value* is related to the light or dark quality of the colour used. A lower value of colour would be nearer to black, such as navy blue. *Saturation* shows the brightness or dullness of the colour (Fellowes & Oakley 2012:499). The more the colour is mixed with other colours, the less the saturation will be. Colours with high saturation create a brighter effect in the eye, while lower saturation will create a more subtle effect and appear to be in the background (Lohr 2008). On the cover page, the forest plants at the top of the page give an example of low saturation because they seem to fade away.

Colour is often used to symbolise emotions or moods (Fellowes & Oakley 2012:499). It is important to notice that these symbolic meanings are not universal and may vary from culture to culture. The colour, purple, for example in Western cultures, is associated with royalty, luxury, religion or wealth. In this regard, *Babalela* could be symbolising the wealth of South Africa's natural resources, which should be respected. Sipe (2001:28) adds the universal association between the colour blue and calmness, detachment and serenity. These associations could all be ascribed to *Babalela*, and would add to the description of the end page as well.

According to Sipe (2001:28), the aspects of colour – *hue*, *value* and *saturation* can help to analyse the colours used in illustrations. Different hues (segments of the spectrum) of

green, brown and purple are used in the illustrations of *Babalela*. None of the colours is too bright, but rather they are used in tinted (addition of white or water to the colours) and shaded (addition of black to the colours) colour tones. The colours have a low intensity and are therefore not very saturated (intense or pure). The shades of green dominate and are usually associated with calmness and peace, adding to the mood conveyed in a forest. The fading shades of green and purples/blues may connect with the idea of fantasy.

The *type* or *typography* (the letters, words and sentences) can alert the reader to main ideas, such as important concepts. Fonts can be changed either by making the letters bold or writing them in italics or altering them by means of colour, dimension, depth, space and shape (Lohr 2008:214–215). The name of the creature is written on top of his head, directing the eye from left to right, following the letters of his name. *Babalela* means 'little one' in Sepedi, according to Preller (2012). The title of the book, *Babalela*, is written in a font that resembles the scribbles of young children. The letters are highlighted with a shadow of the letters, adding dimensional depth. The names of the author, Martie Preller, and of the illustrators, Andries and Erica Maritz, are written in another font in white letters with a black shadow. The different fonts and sizes create contrast, and chunk the information into three parts: the title, the author and the illustrators. The typography forms part of the organisation principle where the title of the book resembles the way learners would write in the Foundation Phase, not very neatly because they are beginner writers. The names of the author and illustrators are neatly written in an easy to read font, which differs from the font of the title, thus chunking the different information.

The integration principle of closure is applied on the cover page, because the picture gives the summary of the theme of the story. Babalela is sitting in a tree, surrounded by forest greens, and next to a river; therefore, the setting suggests a forest. The back cover is a continuation of the forest on the front cover. The forest suggests a safe haven for Babalela who seems to be sitting quite relaxed on the branch. The interaction between the words and the illustration has already started on the cover page. The mood of calmness and relaxation is exposed through the illustration; the mood is not explicitly written in words.

3.2 ENDPAPERS

The endpapers or end pages are the pages affixed to the inside of the front and back covers. They serve as a transition between the exterior and the interior of the book, setting the mood of the story (Johnson 2009:86). These endpapers provide a visual framework and have the same purpose as 'once upon a time' and 'they lived happily ever after' – the classical signals of narrative structure in fairy tales (Hearne & Sutton 1992:84). Endpapers may either be a solid colour or illustrated. The endpapers in *Babalela* are a blank periwinkle blue, creating the so-called white space, a blank paper, which contributes to the sense of completion.

3.3 FRONT MATTER, TITLE PAGE, AND TITLE PAGE DEDICATION

The pages of a book that lie between the endpapers and the text are called the front matter and consist of the blank pages before the title page, the title page dedication, and the copyright information. The blank pages may either be white or coloured. The title page may either be illustrated or not. In *Babalela*, the front matter is white.

The title page of *Babalela* is illustrated: Babalela is standing on the left-hand side of the page with his back to the reader.
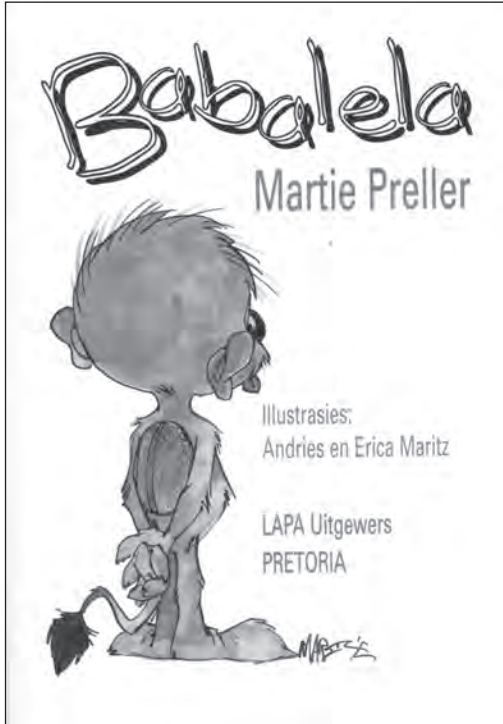

Figure 2: Title page of _Babalela_

The reader now has a full view of Babalela: his front view on the cover page and a view from behind on the title page. This view adds to a feeling of closure for the reader, regarding Babalela's looks. He is facing towards the right, directing the reader to turn to the next page. His hands are folded behind his back. The reader can see that Babalela has something on his back which resembles the wings of a ladybird. The typography repeats the title page on top of the page in white with a black shadow in an almost childlike font, but the names of the author, illustrators and publisher are now written in purple on the right-hand side of the page.

The title page dedication and copyright information that follow the title page are illustrated with a branch of a tree with green leaves and a flower, on which is a ladybird. The branch with the flower is pointing towards the next page on the right, again forcing the eye to move from left to right. The ladybird, however, is pointing to the left, navigating the eye towards the information of the copyright and press information, as well as the ISBN number. This contributes to the organisation principle of hierarchy which explains the alignment that directs the eye to the next pages, and to specific chunks of information.

The choice of paper on which the book is printed can influence readers' responses because it creates texture. Nobelman (1988:47 cited in Johnson 2009:87) reveals that glossy paper gives colours a glistening clarity but the light shines equally through all the colours and creates an overall sheen that attracts attention to the surface of a picture and makes it more difficult to focus on specific objects depicted. Nobelman (1988:48) states

that rough-textured paper seems to invite the reader's touch and supports an atmosphere of involvement and intimacy. The levels of light vary when the surface is textured. *Babalela* is printed on glossy paper; therefore, the levels of light do not vary, but are equal to create an even shine.

3.4   THE CONTEXT

On page 5 in *Babalela*, where the story begins, the words are written in a white space at the top of the page, directing the eye to read the words first. The bird is sitting on a branch on the left-hand top corner, focusing the eye to start there. The bird is looking to the right; thus directing the eye to move to the right, down the tree trunk, into the forest below with the big leaves in brighter colours, directing the eye again towards the left and then up again towards the bird, forming once again a circle. The circular alignment is a repeated element throughout the picture book. The function of this alignment may be to create a feeling of security with the reader, since little ones usually need to feel secure.

The sense of depth is accentuated through the bright green leaves in the foreground at the bottom while fading towards the white space. The illustration opens up the words for the reader, and keeps the reader's interest through the insects along the way that navigate the eye. This is an example of the integration principle, that is, the simultaneous presentation of text and images to facilitate the big picture (Lohr 2008:46). This page illustrates the importance of the composition of the different elements to make way for the bigger picture.

On the following pages, the words are placed in similar ways in a white space in the middle of the top of the pages, repeating the first sentence three times, creating an integrated similarity. The white space creates a sense of balance and harmony, contributing to the feeling of the forest as a secluded and safe space where Babalela lives (Preller 2000:6–7). This perception is secured by the repetition of the illustration on pages 7, 9 and 31, as well as the illustration on the cover page and pages 5, 28–29 (Preller 2000).

The proportions of a book are chosen for certain reasons, for example, a strongly horizontal plane where the illustrations include much background or landscape. Strong vertical planes allow the artist to depict human characters on a large close-up scale (Doonan 1993). Both these planes are applicable to *Babalela*. Horizontal planes are formed when the artist illustrates the story across two pages, for example pages 6 and 7; in fact almost all the illustrations flow across two pages in *Babalela*. On pages 19, 23 and 32, the illustrations are vertical, and all of these pages show Babalela where he is captured in a glass ball, where he becomes very cross, and then where he is sleeping safe and sound in his bed of leaves at the end.

On some of the pages where the illustrations are on a double page, for example pages 10 and 11, a vertical picture is shown of the antagonist, the man who captured Babalela,

illustrating him as large and close-up. The horizontal illustrations encourage the reader to take a broader and more objective view of the characters and the situations. The vertical plane may increase the reader's empathy and identification with Babalela who can be portrayed closer within this plane (Sipe 2001:25). On pages 8 and 9, there is a sudden change in the illustration as well as in the placement of the written text.

Figure 3: *Babalela* page 8

Figure 4: *Babalela* page 9

The illustration on page 9 is a repetition of the illustration on page 7, but now the surrounding space is much brighter because of the white space; and on page 8, the illustration fills three quarters of the page. The bright red and yellow colours of the clothes of the character who captures Babalela, represent caution or danger because they correspond with bright yellow and red colours in nature which are commonly associated with dangerous animals, such as bees or snakes. This is confirmed on page 11, where the reader sees how Babalela is captured. According to Sipe (2001:28), very bright primary colours are vivid and associated with action. In *Babalela*, the capturing of Babalela is an act that changes his life and eventually leads to his development in character.

The illustrations enrich the narrative and convey added meaning. The reader meets the antagonist: a huge man wearing a red cap and a bright yellow shirt is seen filling almost the whole page. The vibrant colours of his clothes are in stark contrast with the blues and greens of the forest. He looks nasty, with a huge chin and unfriendly eyes. In the

foreground, the plants and grasses are a contrasting white and the text is written in black at the bottom of the page. The words are accentuated and written one by one:

En toe (And then)

een dag (one day)

The next words are placed carefully at the beginning of each sentence:

voetstappe (footsteps)

breek (break)

knars (grit)

staan (stand)

Using the organisational principle by applying the actions of proximity and alignment (see page 10), the words, echoing the sound of footsteps, are manipulated to create a feeling of anxiety and suspense, as well as to draw the reader's attention to the spelling of the separate words. The next page continues to the climax where the antagonist sees Babalela:

buk (bend)

en bulder (shout)

dawer (echo, thunder)

Babalela wakened by the shouting, rubbed his droopy eyes.

The words are chunked together strategically: on page 8, the words are placed in the bottom left. The illustration is placed horizontally. According to the PAT design framework, this low positioning of the words implies a problem, something dark, which seems to be the cause why Babalela was captured. The words on the top of page 9 are associated with effect and rarity, in other words, *Babalela* is captured because he is a rare creature nobody has ever seen before. On this page, the illustration is placed vertically, again emphasising the rarity of the strange creature.

On pages 10 and 11, the illustration shows the antagonist holding a box in his right hand, looking to the right, directing the reader's eye to the next page, where the illustration shows that he has Babalela in his left hand. The placement of the illustration of the enormous man, covering the whole page, projects fear which is emphasised by the small Babalela in his huge hand on the next page. Page 10 is an example of chunking where the illustration fills the entire page, giving a sense of a very large man in contrast with the tiny Babalela in the man's hand; therefore, focusing the reader's attention on how frightened Babalela looks by means of the detail of his little body.

A good example of depth in *Babalela*, is found on pages 12 and 13 with the placement of Babalela in the box. It repeats and therefore emphasises how small Babalela is, especially if you refer to the previous page where the illustration shows the small box the human

is holding in his hand. The box is almost as big as the human's hand, but Babalela looks very small in the box, which now looks huge in comparison, thus creating contrast.

Pages 12 and 13 are a good example of lines and shapes that contribute to texture. A *shape* is the two-dimensional form represented by an object. The three main shapes are: circle, equilateral triangle, and square. Circles are curvy directions, triangles are diagonal directions, and squares can be vertical or horizontal directions. Irregular shapes are easier to draw the attention. Horizontal shapes give a sense of stability and calm. Vertical shapes are more exciting and suggest energy. Diagonal shapes, like diagonal lines, create a dynamic sense of motion or tension. The placement of shape – top, centre, bottom, left, or right – can suggest meaning. Shape placement in the upper half of a picture implies freedom, happiness, triumph, or spirituality, while centre stage in an illustration is associated with greater importance (Johnson 2009:90).

In *Babalela*, the box takes up the space of a double page, using vertical, horizontal as well as diagonal lines. The texture is shown through the white scratch lines on the walls and floor of the box. The use of watercolour enhances the texture as well. This is also found in the texture of Babalela. The use of artistic media such as paint (eg, watercolour and dyes) and techniques (eg, washes) results in a translucent tone, adding to characterisation, setting, and the mood in a particular story (Norton 2011:123).The lines and the white space, created by the high value of colours, and creating the illusion of space are in sharp contrast with the frightened and perplexed character inside the box.

According to Moebius (1986:149), a character placed on the left-hand page is more secure in a confined space than a character placed on the right-hand page who runs the risk of being moved into a situation of risk or adventure. On the title page of *Babalela*, he is placed on the left-hand side; therefore, in a confined space. When turning to the story, most of the time Babalela is on the right-hand page of a double page illustration, or on the right-hand of a one page illustration. On page 7, Babalela is asleep on his leaf. According to Moebius's (1986:149) remark, Babalela runs the risk of moving into an unwanted situation. Turning to page 8, this remark seems to be correct, as Babalela is spotted by the human. Again, the illustration shows Babalela who awakens on the right-hand page of the illustration. On pages 11 and 13, he is captured.

Space and *balance* are important for composition. Space occurs between visuals and text, and facilitates reading and perception. Space can be divided into white space, negative space, counter space, and trapped space (Lohr 2008:272). White space should be included into a good design as it directs the eye to important information by chunking and separating the context (Lohr 2008:272). Space also helps in balancing images. Balance can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Asymmetrical balance draws more attention than symmetrical (Lohr 2008:275).

On page 16, the white space in trapped inside a ball, showing Babalela inside the glass jar, contrary to page 17 where the people are illustrated in bright colours. Pages 18 and 22 consist of white space except for the words. These white spaces draw attention

to the words, which describe the change in Babalela's character. He changes from a frightened, sad character into a furious, confident character, as shown on page 23.

Figure 5: *Babalela* **page 23**

Figure 6: *Babalela* **page 25**

Pages 25 and 26 show an illustration of Babalela in victorious flight through a white space. His wings are spread wide open, creating, as previously pointed out, the illusion of the fragile, transparent wings of an insect such as a dragonfly. The white space adds to the brightness and high value of Babalela's colour.

Texture is created by the high value of purple and blue circles on Babalela's wings. The dainty wings are in contrast with the little cases they are kept in, and are illustrated with a darker shade (lower value) of a deep blue-purple to create the illusion of a solid container with textures of circles on, which protects the wings. Balance is created with his huge eyes, big black nose, ears and tail.

The last page of *Babalela* shows the balanced interrelationship between text and illustrations.

Only one sentence, 'And thís is where he belongs' (*En dís waar hy hoort*), where the /í/ of /*dis*/ (this) is accentuated, implying that he belongs on his leaf on the tree trunk in the forest as illustrated. The white space conveys mood and emotion, in this instance a feeling of home coming and peace. Babalela is showing his back to the reader,

emphasising the fact that he wants to be left alone. The sense of isolation is created through the words on the top left of the page, and the white space in between the words and the illustration, which is placed on the bottom right of the page.

En dís waar hy hoort.

32

Figure 7: *Babalela* **page 32**

4 CHARACTERISATION THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF TEXT AND IMAGE

The illustration on page 23 shows a very furious Babalela. Suddenly, the fear he showed on the previous page is gone. He is standing straight with his arms folded in front of him in a very majestic manner. His little feet are planted apart from each other, firmly on the ground, and he is staring unwaveringly with a dark muddy green cloud above his head, showing that he is cross and annoyed with the given treatment. To emphasise his fury, his cheeks and front head are tinted with red. His red little tongue is showing on the side, probably to accentuate his determination to change his fate. He flies off triumphantly with his wings and hands spread wide open and his eyes closed (Preller 2000:25).

The illustrations in *Babalela* are a good example of controlled sequences which create paths through which the reader can travel. The illustrations in *Babalela* are compiled to express progression, specifically emotional progression: a man found and captured

Babalela. He took him far away where he looked at Babalela through a magnifying glass. Then he put Babalela into a glass ball so that other people could come and watch. These people included males, females as well as children. The illustration shows unfriendly, grotesque men, but then they move into the background with only faded outlines to show that they are there. The only man in colour is the one who captured Babalela in the first place. The progression escalates from one man, to more people, to grotesque men, and then declines to one man. This progression includes time as well. Babalela lived securely in his forest but then he was captured and taken far, far away. He escaped and went back to the forest.

The progress in the character of Babalela shifted from a calm, relaxed character, to one who is captured and taken away. The illustration of the character Babalela after having been captured reflects emotions of vulnerability, sadness and shyness. This is portrayed by the look in Babalela's eyes and his tongue that sticks out, as well as his hands on his back as if to cover himself from the eyes of the onlookers, and the way he bends to the front, away from onlookers. Then his character changes (Preller 2000:23). He firstly becomes furious with these people who took him away and stared at him. This change is emphasised by means of the illustration on page 23 where Babalela is the only vertical picture on a white page. From his bending body, he now stands up straight and conveys a proud and firm, almost majestic attitude which bursts open the moment he escapes back to his forest.

On the next page, Babalela flies triumphantly through the window. The illustration shows the man who caught him, reaching out in order to catch him or prevent him from flying, but he is too late. Babalela is flying with arms open wide on a white page. The illustration fills the entire page, again with a white background, and shows his triumphant escape. Page 26 shows an illustration of Babalela flying back to his forest. The forest is shown underneath him through the vague illustration. The next page is a continuation of his return to the forest with the river and the plants. Once back in the forest, he settles down and falls asleep. He has grown to independence. He can look after himself and he wants to be left alone.

The written words in combination with the illustrations depict a character who has grown from a tiny little person into a confident and independent person who can look after himself. He has escaped and therefore overcome the problem in his life. A life cycle has been completed. The illustration differs from that in the beginning of the story on page 7. This illustration accentuates Babalela and the fact that he wants to be left alone (see page 10 on proximity). He is lying with his back turned to the reader, while he was facing the reader in the beginning. The forest does not encircle him, as if to protect him as in the beginning. He has conquered being caught and developed into an independent little creature.

5 THE LANGUAGE OF THE WRITTEN TEXT

The language used in *Babalela* is simple and vivid and interacts with the illustrations. The brevity of the words evokes depth of meaning rather than using long descriptions. The words have metaphorical, rhythmic and onomatopoeic language. For example, on pages 5, 6, 7, 28 and 30, the repetition of the words '*diep, diep in die donker bos . . .*' (deep, deep in the dark forest . . .) alerts the readers that something is going to happen. This is made possible through the alliteration of the /d/ [ɗ], as well as the assonance of /o/ [ɔ] and /ie/ [i]. *Babalela* uses easy words, but also more advanced words. In Afrikaans the more syllables there are in words, the more difficult the words are to read and to write. In *Babalela*, there are several examples of these conjunctions, such as: *Babalela*, *diepgroen* (deep green), *boomstomp* (tree trunk), *voetstappe* (footsteps), *vergrootglas* (magnifying glass), *eienaardig* (strange), *petietserig* (tiny), *pateties* (pathetic), *gesiggie* (little face).

The words are written in the middle of the page in a white, light spot. The words are surrounded by trees, branches and leaves that resemble ferns, palms and big leaves, as well as flowers, a bird and insects: a caterpillar, a dragonfly and a snail. The illustration shows the reader what the words imply: a thick, dark forest where the sun only sometimes peeps through the branches. The composition where the plants are surrounding the text forms a circle that gives a sense of security. The colours of the plants are not dark colours, but the objects such as leaves are highlighted with black lines. The illustrators used lower values of blues, greens and browns to give an illusion of darkness. Since the picture book is for beginner readers, they might be frightened by too dark colours, and the intention of the book is to show how magical and peaceful the forest is without intruders.

The next two pages repeat the verse from the previous pages, and again confirm the thick and wild plant growth. The illustration is continued from the first to the second page to form a unit. At this stage the reader has the feeling of moving deeper and deeper into the forest through thick bushes and leaves towards the place where Babalela is sleeping on a leaf on a branch on a trunk of a tree. Again a dragonfly and caterpillar can be seen. These insects show the abundance of the forest, keeping the reader interested. They also balance the size of Babalela. At this stage, the words: *diep, diep in 'n donker bos* (deep, deep in a dark forest) are the beginning of each verbal text on each page. They repeat the feeling of moving deeper and deeper into the forest. This repetition emphasises the feeling of harmony and peace in the forest (compare the action repetition discussed previously).

The remarks made by the people make Babalela very cross. These remarks are verbal insults from people who do not know him, and therefore his progressing anger is justified. His little face reddens with fury. He has had enough! He growls: I am Babalela. Leave me alone! Now he is standing there without fear. His arms are folded to say that

he wants to be left alone; his tail is up in the air and he is looking very brave and angry. His feet are planted a few inches from each other on the ground. There is a dark cloud in a muddy green on top of his head, showing the written words on the previous page.

6   FANTASY ELEMENTS IN BABALELA

Children must understand that at the heart of all fantasy lies the truth about ourselves and the world around us (Johnson 2009:166). In *Babalela*, the main truth is that humans should leave the forest (nature) and the wonderful creatures in nature alone. This truth can engage children in critical thinking, which forms a crucial component of new multimodal literacies (Lapp, Moss & Rowsell 2012:368). The story connects to global real-life issues, such as: destroying indigenous forests; capturing strange and exotic animals; and keeping animals in captivity (eg, in zoos or game reserves). The content provides openings for questions, queries, wonderings, and 'what ifs'. Moral obligations must be met, building on the character of the person. The character Babalela also represents a child who has to take a journey (which is not always planned), to leave behind a safe and known world, and to conquer certain problems to become independent.

7   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The goal of the article was to show how picture books such as *Babalela* (Preller 2000) can be used to equip pre-service teachers with the necessary vocabulary of visual literacy to eventually enhance young learners' vocabulary, comprehension and critical reading skills to prepare them for the digital era in which they live. *Babalela* was analysed using the PAT design framework of Lohr (2008) to show how the words and illustrations in a picture book connect to convey meaning of the entire text. It seems that the PAT design framework can be a helpful tool to use for the development of visual literacy skills. This framework of principles, actions and tools assists in expanding learners' interpretive repertoires by extending their own understanding of a variety of concepts regarding visual literacy. The vocabulary of visual design needs to be learned and understood in order to be taught and understood. Moving beyond the traditional boundaries of literacy could help expand the perspectives and strategies readers and teachers may need to become literate in today's society.

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