

## Scene Continuity in Picturebooks: Sensory Verbs and Narrative Viewpoint 絵本における画面間の連続性—知覚動詞と視点—

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絵本は通常複数のページから構成されている。そのため、絵本の物語世界を成立させるためには、独立するページごとの連続性が重要となる。こうした連続性を生じさせる上で言葉が大きな役割を果たすことが認識されてきた。しかし、依然としてどのような言語的手段によって連続性が生じるのかという点に関しては議論の余地がある。そこで本稿では、絵本の言葉と画面間の連続性における特徴の一端の解明を目指し、英語の絵本を対象に知覚動詞に焦点を当て、この動詞によって連続性が生み出され得ることを論じる。特に三人称小説における語り部分の視点変化について提案された和田 (2015) の枠組みを援用し、知覚動詞の使用によってもたらされる視点の変化が、物語が重要な局面へ移行することを暗示し、結果的に画面間の連続性の発生につながると主張する。

**Keywords:** *picturebooks, sensory verbs, narrative viewpoint*  
絵本, 知覚動詞, 視点

### 1. Introduction

Narratives in picturebooks are normally divided into pages with a picture/pictures and written narration and/or dialogue (of course, some pages or some picturebooks have no text whatsoever). Thus, as Nikolajeva (2010: 29) points out, “[t]he most essential code in reading a picturebook is its sequential nature;” a gap between pages must be filled in order to understand the plot’s development. This characteristic has led some previous studies to investigate devices or strategies that contribute to creating continuity among pages or scenes (cf. Matsumoto (1982), Sasamoto (2001b), Nikolajeva and Scott (2001), Takeuchi (2002), Fujimoto (2007), Nikolajeva (2010)). For example, question forms in flap-books, according to Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 152), are the most primitive linguistic device utilized: “‘Where is the dog?’ – (open the flap) – ‘The dog is under the table.’” Such questions can make the reader want to turn the page for answers, which generates continuity from page to page (Fujimoto (2007)).

While continuity in picturebooks of course results from visual images (albeit to varying degrees), Takeuchi (2002) argues that linguistic expressions play a more significant role in “gluing” independent scenes together. Although other previous studies have also realized significant roles which linguistic expressions play in creating continuity (cf. Sasamoto (2001b), Nikolajeva and Scott (2001)), there nonetheless remain unexamined expressions that appear to contribute to continuity

(as will be discussed in this paper). Unfortunately, as Sasamoto (2001a) puts it, characteristics of verbal expressions in picturebooks as such have not been fully investigated in the first place; linguistic expressions in picturebooks are, as it were, a frontier which should be explored to deepen our understanding of picturebooks.

Hoping to contribute to the study of picturebooks, therefore, this paper will examine English picturebooks, looking to find linguistic devices or strategies which enhance relations between separate pages or scenes. Specifically, we will focus on sensory verbs in third person narratives which serve to cause a change in the reader’s point of view. In this regard, Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) make an intuitive yet significant comment regarding the following spread from *Curious George*<sup>1, 2</sup>:

- (1) One day George saw a man.  
He had on a large yellow straw hat.  
The man saw George too.  
“What a nice little monkey,” he thought.  
“I would like to take him home with me.”  
He put his hat on the ground  
and, of course, George was curious.  
He came down from the tree  
to look at the large yellow hat. (Spread 2)

<sup>1</sup> All underlines and double underlines in the examples of this paper are ours.

<sup>2</sup> The word *spread* refers to two separate pages, left and right, viewed together when a book is laid open. Spread 1 refers to the first two-page

pair at the beginning of the story, followed by Spread 2, Spread 3 and so on.

According to Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 121), “[t]he words ‘George saw’ [in the first underlined sentence] express the character’s literal point of view: we share his perspective and ‘see’ the man in the yellow hat together with him.” Their observation suggests that sensory verbs can serve to not only introduce the character’s viewpoint but further invite the reader to share said viewpoint. This observation raises some pertinent questions. Is there any linguistically motivated mechanism which ensures interpretations like that pointed out by Nikolajeva and Scott? Why, in the first place, is the character’s viewpoint given priority in the situation described? In other words, what is the function of such a shift in viewpoint? The main purpose of this paper is to answer these questions, showing that sensory verbs can function, roughly speaking, to change the narrative viewpoint, thus implying that the plot will develop into a crucial stage, motivating the reader to know what will happen next. Hence, they can be exploited to create or enhance continuity between scenes or pages.

Section 2 first introduces the central framework which provides a foundation for answering the above questions. Based on this framework, then, Section 3 proposes a particularly relevant function of sensory verbs in picturebooks. Section 4 analyzes five picturebooks containing sensory verbs which perform the function proposed in Section 3. Section 5 deals with other picturebooks where sensory verbs perform slightly different functions from those touched upon in Section 4, but nonetheless still play certain roles in plot development as proposed in Section 3. It should be noted from the get go that this paper does not intend to provide a comprehensive study on sensory verbs in picturebooks; they, of course, do not always function as proposed here. Section 6, thus, attempts to show an introductory analysis to such alternative cases, which we hope can prove helpful for future study. Section 7 concludes this paper.

## 2. Theoretical Background

Before getting into discussion on the characteristics of linguistic expressions in picturebooks, this section introduces a theoretical framework related to our analysis: Wada’s (2015) framework concerning the reader’s projected point of view in third person narratives. Although Wada’s main focus involves analyzing tense phenomena in third person narratives, his framework, which he proposes in the course of said analysis,

<sup>3</sup> Of course, there are cases where sensory verbs do not result in a shared viewpoint with the character. Section 6 touches on such cases.

<sup>4</sup> Wada (2015) further divides the NPBP into two types: interpretive environment A and interpretive environment B. In interpretive environment A, the narrator describes situations from the point of time where he/she is narrating; he/she is outside of the narrative world. On the

other hand, in interpretive environment B, the narrator describes events from the point of time where these events occur; the narrator’s viewpoint is in the narrative world. This difference in the types of NPBP, however, is not directly related to this paper’s discussion. Thus, we will not go into detail here. See Wada (2015) for details.

will be helpful for this present examination on picturebook language. Particularly, his framework provides us with a solution to the question as to how sensory verbs invite the reader to share the character’s perspective and see the situation in question together with that character.<sup>3</sup>

Wada (2015) first divides the narrative part in third person tales into two types with respect to the narrative viewpoint, or what Wada calls *the viewpoint of situation-description*, a base viewpoint which the narrator invokes to describe the situation in question (see also Wada (2009) for the viewpoint of situation-description): the narrator’s perspective-based part (NPBP) and the character’s perspective-based part (CPBP). The NPBP is related to the narrator’s viewpoint of situation-description where the narrator describes situations through his/her own perspective. For instance, Wada (2015: 302) provides the following example to illustrate his point:

- (2) Charlie ignored him [Neil] and got up to look around the room. A small blue suitcase stood on the floor by the door. A few books, some pretty tattered looking, lay on the bed. Charlie walked to the desk and picked up a framed picture of a beautiful girl who looked to be in her twenties...

(N. H. Kleinbaum, *Dead Poets Society*, p.121)

According to Wada (2015), the underlined sentence corresponds to the NPBP, describing the situation from the narrator’s viewpoint: only the narrator’s viewpoint is involved in the description of the situation.<sup>4</sup>

In the CPBP, on the other hand, the narrator describes situations through the character’s viewpoint of situation-description. In (2), for example, the double-underline indicates that the situation is described from the character’s viewpoint. The first underlined sentence contains the expression *look around the room*, which suggests that the following descriptions of things in that room are done from the character’s (Charlie) viewpoint (See also Wada (2009) and Yamaoka (2012)). In this case, Wada (2015) assumes that the narrator’s viewpoint of situation-description is incorporated into that of the character. What is important here is that the double-underlined parts occur in the same moment of narrative time as the underlined part. Wada (2015) names a set of situations taking place within the same narrative time a *narrative bit*. The time of Charlie’s looking around the room and that of the description of things in

that room form one narrative bit. To sum up, a narrative part will constitute the CPBP if (i) the text follows a sentence which contains expressions referencing the character's five senses via the use of sensory verbs and (ii) this text is in the same narrative bit as the aforementioned sensory-related sentence.<sup>5</sup>

Adapting Wada's (2015) narrative framework to the analysis of picturebook language, this paper attempts to clarify whether sensory verbs may in fact play a similar role in the narratives found within picturebook stories.

### 3. Proposal

According to Wada (2015), sensory verbs can induce the switching of the narrative viewpoint from that of the narrator to the character if the two criteria mentioned above are satisfied. If this is the case in picturebook language as well, this linguistic mechanism makes narration through the character's viewpoint possible, as Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) suggest in *Curious George*. In fact, the second underlined sentence in (1) appears in the environment where the two criteria are fulfilled, and thus the character's (i.e. George's) viewpoint is involved in interpreting the text. The first underlined sentence contains the sensory verb *saw*, meeting criterion (i). Criterion (ii) is satisfied as well. The second underlined sentence describes the man that George is seeing. Hence, this sentence should exist within the same narrative time as the first underlined sentence. These two underlined sentences, in other words, make one narrative bit. Wada's (2015) framework, therefore, predicts that a switch from a NPBP to a CPBP takes place between the first and second underlined sentences in (1); the second underlined sentence describes the situation through George's viewpoint.

What effect, then, does a switch of viewpoint bring about? Assuming such a switch occurs in the picturebook world as well, we can assume much more vividly described scenes would follow, since the narrator describes the situation through the viewpoint of the character experiencing the story world. The reader, then, will be more immersed and invested in the situation in question (if we borrow the wordings of Nikolajeva and Scott (2001), we share the character's perspective and "see" the situation together with that character). It thus seems reasonable to say that such a situation should and would play a crucial role in the plot. This reasoning leads us to the following proposal:

- (3) the switch of the viewpoint, with sensory verbs, from narrator to story character would occur around the point in the narrative immediately preceding a crucial stage in the plot.

In other words, changing the viewpoint to a CPBP hints that something crucial will happen soon. This effect, then, motivates the reader to know what will happen in the subsequent scene or page, contributing to more intriguing continuity between consecutive scenes.

The following two sections are intended to demonstrate the validity of the above proposal in (3) via the analysis of several picturebooks.

### 4. Sensory Verbs before Climatic Events

One crucial stage in the picturebook narrative would be the climax. It can be hypothesized that some sensory verbs may appear immediately before climatic events in order to foreshadow the plot's development toward the climax. In this section, five picturebooks will be analyzed in attempting to uncover evidence in support of this hypothesis.

#### 4-1. *Cock-a-Moo-Moo!*

Let us first analyze *Cock-a-Moo-Moo!* The main character of this book is *Cockerel*, who suddenly forgets how to crow like a typical cockerel. He fails to say "cock-a-doodle-doo" as expected, saying instead "COCK-A-MOO-MOO!" like a cow (Spread 2), "COCK-A-QUACK-QUACK!" like a duck (Spread 3) and so on. His inability to crow correctly causes the hens to scorn him, which makes him sad. In the midst of this sadness, the following scene comes:

- (4) But that night, when all the animals were asleep, Cockerel heard a noise.  
Someone was sniffing...and rustling...and sneaking into the hen house! It was a... (Spread 7)
- (5) FOX! (Spread 8)

In (4), the double-underlined sentence immediately follows the underlined sentence which contains the sensory verb *heard*. In addition, the double-underlined part describes what Cockerel heard; the sentences together make one narrative bit. Therefore, the double-underlined sentence qualifies as a character

<sup>5</sup> According to Wada (2015), the CPBP is also divided into two types: interpretive environment C and interpretive environment D. Interpretive environment C is a narrative part which is introduced in the text: the narrator describes situations through a character's viewpoint. So the criteria given in the text are, more specifically, exclusively related to

interpretive environment C. Interpretive environment D corresponds to so-called represented speech: the narrator describes situations while his/her viewpoint of situation-description is immersed in the character's consciousness. Since our main focus is put on interpretive environment C, interpretive environment D is not dealt with any further in this paper.

perspective-based part, as the narrator describes the situation through the character's, or Cockerel's, viewpoint.

The proposal in (3), then, predicts that the CPBP in (4) will lead to some crucial situation which plays a significant role in the story. In fact, the next spread in (5) introduces a fox who turns out to have caused the noises Cockerel had heard in the hen house. The appearance of this animal turns Cockerel's bad fortune around. After Spread 8, Cockerel, who comes across the intruding fox before anyone else, attempts to scare the fox away, crowing with his loud, unconventional calls: *COCK-A-MOO-MOO!*, *COCK-A-QUACK-QUACK!*, and so on (Spread 9). Finally, he succeeds in driving out this enemy and saving the hens' lives. The other animals shift their attitude toward Cockerel from scornful to grateful, making him very happy indeed. This subsequently helps Cockerel remember how to crow like a proper cockerel, at last belting out "COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO!" (Spread 12). It is the sensory verb *heard* in (4) that introduces the CPBP which plays a climactic role in introducing the aforementioned significant antagonist, i.e. the fox, into the story.

Moreover, this effect brought about by the sensory verb in Spreads 7 and 8, as mentioned in Section 3, will further raise the reader's interest in what will happen next. This increased attention is reinforced by the expression *It was a...*, where the sentence ends on a cliffhanger; such an expression "encourages the viewer to turn the page and find out what happens next" (Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 152)).<sup>6</sup> The CPBP and the incomplete sentence, thus, can be assumed to work synergistically in eliciting the reader's desire to know the answer to the question *What will happen in the next spread?* The accompanying illustrations also assist with enhancing – and perhaps confirming – this effect of the CPBP. While almost all of the spreads in this picturebook include Cockerel, he does not, however, appear in Spread 8 in (5), where the big fox first appears. The absence of Cockerel in this spread would seem to imply that the situation is experienced from his viewpoint (cf. Takeuchi (2002); see also Nodelman (1991)). It is thus reasonable to say that the character-oriented viewpoint induced by the sensory verb *heard* in Spread 7 carries over into the illustration in the next spread, lending support to the proposal in (3); sensory verbs can be exploited to introduce significant plot development and contribute to creating continuity between scenes.

#### 4-2. *Guess How Much I Love You*

<sup>6</sup> Such stories are often referred to as a page-turners (cf. Nikolajeva and Scott (2001), Fujimoto (2007)).

The second picturebook to examine is *Guess How Much I Love you*. This picturebook has two protagonists: the smaller character Little Nutbrown Hare and the larger character Big Nutbrown Hare (hereafter Little and Big, respectively). Before going to bed, Little suddenly wanted Big to guess how much he loves Big. Big thought it difficult to answer the question, which made Little try to express his love toward Big with his arms stretched out, saying "This much" (Spread 3). Big, then, spread his longer arms out in order to show that he loved Little all the more. Not to be outdone, Little attempted to show his love was much greater than Big's by stretching himself out as much as possible. However, since Big is much taller than Little, he was able to stretch himself to a much greater length than Little could, effectively one-upping Little yet again. Similar competitions between the two Hares continue until Spread 11, when the following Spread comes:

- (6) That's very far, thought Little Nutbrown Hare. He was almost too sleepy to think any more.  
Then he looked beyond the thorn bushes, out into the big dark night. Nothing could be further than the sky.  
(Spread 12)

The underlined sentence contains the sensory verb *looked*, meeting condition (i) for CPBP qualification. The double-underlined part, in addition, makes a narrative bit with the underlined sentence because the sky at the end of the double-underlined part exists within the same timeframe as the dark night mentioned at the end of the underlined part. Hence condition (ii) is also fulfilled, thereby making the double-underlined sentence a CPBP.

The proposal in (3) again predicts that the switching from NPBP to CPBP implies that a climactic event in the story will happen soon; here, that the CPBP describes the night sky vividly and immerses the reader in the scene implies that something related to the night sky will happen soon after. In fact, as predicted, we immediately get a deviation from the prior recurring narrative pattern of Little repeatedly being outdone by Big (see Kasanuki (2010)).<sup>7</sup> Take the following spread:

- (7) "I love you right up to the MOON," he said, and closed his eyes.  
"Oh, that's far," said Big Nutbrown Hare. "That is very, very far."  
(Spread 13)

<sup>7</sup> Kasanuki (2010) calls such a deviation a *schema refreshment*.

Spread 13 shows that Little fell asleep as soon as he said that he loved Big right up to the moon (depicting the night sky from the previous spread), confident Big could not counter with a satisfactory retort. Little got the better of Big for the first time. Again, a sensory verb appears immediately before this climactic point in the story, encouraging the reader to turn the page through constructing the subtle, if not unconscious, expectation that the most important event in the story will soon occur.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4-3. *Henrietta's First Winter*

This section analyzes *Henrietta's First Winter*. The central character is Henrietta, a mouse-like animal living alone after her mother's death who has yet to experience the difficulties of winter. Other animals have told Henrietta that she should store up food for the coming winter. Following their suggestion, she starts to collect nuts and berries. Unfortunately, after filling her cupboard with provisions, it starts to rain, and the ensuing deluge washes away all of the food she worked so hard to gather. Not giving up, she begins to gather food again, once more filling the cupboard full. However, this time around she loses her food to thieving insects. In response, other animals help Henrietta to collect food, and she manages to store enough for the winter. She is so happy that she holds a tea party with the animals, not realizing that the excessive celebration will leave her with nothing to eat afterwards. At a loss after these events, the following spread comes:

- (8) She looked out of her window. Snow was falling. What could she do? There were no more nuts and berries left.  
(Spread 13)

In (8), the underlined sentence has the sensory verb *looked*. The double-underlined part describes the scenery as seen from Henrietta's window. The first two sentences in (8), thus, make a narrative bit. These observations lead to the conclusion that the switch to a character-oriented viewpoint takes place between the underlined and double-underlined sentences.

It can thus be predicted that the situation shown in Spread 13 will lead to a crucial turning point in the story. This time around, however, the plot proceeds in a different direction from the stories discussed previously. The last two spreads of this story are as follows:

- (9) She was very tired and very full of party food. "I'll have just a little sleep," she said to herself. "Then I'll see if I can find a few scraps of food under the snow." When she woke up... (Spread 14)  
(10) It was spring! (Spread 15)

In contrast to her previous behavior, Henrietta gives up on collecting food due to the snow outside, and instead goes to bed (Spread 14). Upon waking, suddenly it has become spring. Henrietta survived her first winter by hibernating on a full stomach, which, unbeknownst to her, she was able to do thanks to her tea party feasting.

The sensory verb introduces the CPBP where a foreboding event (i.e. snow) is experienced vividly through Henrietta's viewpoint. This immerses the reader in this event, which enhances the reader's concern as to what will happen to Henrietta. The CPBP is soon followed by the climax, where Henrietta has passively and unexpectedly survived the winter, a narrative conclusion further lending support to the proposed role of sensory verbs.

#### 4-4. *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*

This subsection deals with *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*. As the title indicates, the story centers around the relationship between three little wolves and a big bad pig. One day, the wolves are told by their mother to build a house of their own. The wolves then build their first house with bricks, which a kind kangaroo had given them. Suddenly, the big bad pig comes along to the wolves' brick house and says "Little wolves, little wolves, let me come in!" (Spread 4). Frightened by the pig, the wolves refuse to let him into their house. Angered, the big bad pig starts destroying the house with a sledgehammer, and the wolves only narrowly escape from the crumbling brick abode. After repeating a similar course of events with houses constructed from various materials, the three wolves realize that they need a more ingenious approach to deal with the antagonistic pig. They thus decide to build their house out of flowers. The pig, as suspected, shows up at the wolves' new home intent on destruction, and we get the following scene:

- (11) But as he took a deep breath, ready to huff and puff, he smelled the soft scent of the flowers. It was fantastic. And because the scent took this breath away, the pig took

<sup>8</sup> There is, however, a twist in the final spread. After Big lies down next to the sleeping Little, he whispers "I love you right up to the moon — AND BACK" (Spread 15). So, in fact, it turns out that Big is the true winner of this friendly competition at the end of the story (see also

Kasanuki's (2010) analysis). Nonetheless, this finale does not invalidate the conclusions reached in the analysis above.

another breath and then another. Instead of huffing and puffing, he began to sniff.

He sniffed deeper and deeper until he was quite filled with the fragrant scent. His heart became tender and he realized how horrible he had been in the past. In other words, he became a big *good* pig. He started to sing and to dance the tarantella. (Spread 14)

The underlined sentence contains the sensory verb *smelled*. The double-underlined sentence depicts the scent of the flowers that the pig smelled. This shows that the underlined and double-underlined sentences are in the same narrative time, making one narrative bit. The double-underlined sentence is, thus, a CPBP.

However, unlike the examples analyzed in Sections 4-1 - 4-3, the sensory verb in question appears in a spread with much more text. According to Kosokabe and Suzuki (eds.) (2012), picturebooks should reduce the number of words as much as possible since words and images, as is often said, are in a complementary relation: picturebooks do not need a lot of words because images also convey information in the story (see also Sasamoto (2001a), Fujimoto (2015: 53-54)). In this sense, since Spread 14 does not represent what one might deem a so-called “typical” picturebook text-to-illustration ratio, the effect brought about by *smelled* might not be as strong as those of the other three sensory verbs discussed in this section. Nevertheless, the sensory verb in (11) also demonstrates a similar function: it serves to alter the narrator’s viewpoint to that of a character-based experience, indicating that the plot will immediately develop toward the crucial stage. The scent of the flowers, in fact, turned the bad pig into the *good* pig. He started to sing and dance with a kind heart. This change in the pig’s personality brings about a substantial change to the wolves’ life. In the next spread, they notice that the pig no longer means them any harm, and they start to play together. Afterward, they invite the pig to their house, which is followed by the final spread:

(12) They offered him china tea and strawberries and wolfberries, and asked him to stay with them as long as he wanted. The pig accepted, and they all lived happily together ever after. (Spread 16)

The wolves’ tranquil life described in Spread 16 is due to the fantastic scent of the flowers. Therefore, the sensory verb *smelled* – although placed slightly at a word-for-word distance in direct relation to the climax when compared to the other three sensory verbs discussed thus far in this section – appears right before the crucial transition in the plot.

#### 4-5. *Bears in Beds*

Finally, in the last picturebook, *Bears in Beds*, the sentence with the key sensory verb serves a double function, a slight difference that nonetheless strengthens this paper’s proposal.

A big bear and four little bears take center stage in the story. Spreads 1 to 6 depict scenes where these bears ready themselves for sleep. In Spread 7, then, the big bear turns off the light to go to sleep. However, the big bear wakes up frightened in the middle of the night after hearing a strange sound (Spreads 8 to 9). Then, the following spreads come:

(13) Oh, no!

*Rattle, rattle, rattle* from under the chair.

He turns on the light to see what’s there. (Spread 10)

(14) It’s Fuzzy, Yellow and Calico Bear! Floppy peers from under the chair! (Spread 11)

The underlined sentence in (13) includes the sensory verb *see*. What is of note here is that the sentence with the sensory verb is followed by no other sentences in this particular spread. However, turning the page reveals that the corresponding CPBP appears in the next spread. In (14), the double-underlined sentences express what the big bear sees, which suggests that the underlined and double-underlined sentences make one narrative bit. The double-underlined part, thus, is a CPBP.

This separation of the sentence containing the sensory verb and those with the CPBP into different spreads gives rise to an additional effect which is not observable in spreads that contain the entire narrative bit (like those discussed so far). When reading the underlined sentence in Spread 10, the reader will wonder what the big bear sees and guess that the next page will provide the answer. Thus, the sentence in question here serves all the more as a literal page-turner, like question sentences (see Section 1), encouraging the reader to move forward in the story.

As for the effect proposed in this paper, the CPBP in Spread 11 is at the brink of the plot’s developing in a different direction. Before Spread 11, the five bears slept in their own beds. Spread 12, however, makes it clear that the four little bears were all frightened by the strange sound. The big bear, then, invites them to come up to his bed, saying “Come snuggle close” (Spread 13). The big bear starts to read a story to the little bears (Spread 14), and the book ends with all the bears sleeping together in one bed (Spread 15). The shift from the NPBP to the CPBP takes place at a point which creates the conditions for approaching the climax.

Note in passing that Naruoka (2013) compares *Bears in Beds* to its Japanese translation, concluding that the narrator in the English version tends to take an objective viewpoint, or stay outside of the narrative world, in describing situations. This would mean that the shift described in the CPBP (i.e. the double-underlined part in (14)) is much more pronounced (in the English version) than the other parts of the story since the CPBP marks a deviation from the standard style of narration (i.e. the narrator-based viewpoint). In this sense, there is a good reason to assume that the CPBP in the original version of *Bears in Beds* introduces a significant event to which careful attention should be paid in the plot development.

## 5. Sensory Verbs at Earlier Stages of a Story

The previous section has pursued one possible effect of sensory verbs in picturebooks and dealt with some typical examples which demonstrate the validity of this paper's proposal. All of these picturebooks contain sensory verbs that appear toward the end of a story and introduce a CPBP leading to the most significant event, or climax, of the narrative. The sensory verbs in the picturebooks analyzed so far relate crucially to the most important point in the story.

However, sensory verbs are not utilized only at the most significant points in picturebooks; they can appear, for example, at much earlier stages of the story. This is, we assume, because crucial characters, things, or events related to plot development are sometimes introduced at the very beginning of the story. In such cases, the sensory verbs and the CPBPs created by them are not directly related to the most significant turning point, or climax, in the narrative. Still, they often immediately precede an important event in the plot's development. This section, thus, attempts to expand on this paper's initial proposal given in Section 3, analyzing such examples of sensory verbs in additional picturebook narratives.

### 5-1. *Curious George*

*Curious George*, touched on in Section 1, is the first example to deal with here. The introductory spread introduces George, a little monkey who lived in Africa. Soon after, a crucial event happens in the next spread:

(15) One day George saw a man.

He had on a large yellow straw hat.

The man saw George too.

“What a nice little monkey,” he thought.

“I would like to take him home with me.”

He put his hat on the ground

and, of course, George was curious.

He came down from the tree

to look at the large yellow hat. (Spread 2)

The underlined sentence has the sensory verb *saw*. The double-underlined sentence then describes the man George was seeing, which means that the underlined and double-underlined sentences make a narrative bit. The double-underlined sentence, thus, can be qualified as a CPBP; the scene is seen from, as Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) point out, George's viewpoint.

The yellow straw hat, which is described through the character's viewpoint, and the man, the owner of the hat, change George's life completely. As the last sentence in Spread 2 describes, George starts to show strong interest in the hat, followed by Spread 3, where George plays with the hat. Eventually, he falls into the hands of the man:<sup>9</sup>

(16) The hat covered George's head.

He couldn't see.

The man picked him up quickly and popped him into a bag.

George was caught. (Spread 4)

Afterward, George is brought to an urban area where the rest of the book is devoted to describing funny stories in which George causes trouble for other people. It is now evident that the man and the yellow straw hat cause the story develop in a new direction. Although it shows up in the early stage of the plot, the sensory verb nevertheless hints that an inciting event crucial to the plot's development follows soon after.

### 5-2. *Gorilla*

A second example of sensory verbs in an earlier stage in the story is *Gorilla*, in which Hannah, the protagonist, loves gorillas. She has learned about gorillas through books and TV, but has not seen a real one because her father has no time to take Hannah to the zoo due to his demanding job. However, a certain important development in the plot occurs in Spread 4:

(17) The night before her birthday, Hannah went to bed tingling with excitement — she had asked her father for a gorilla!

<sup>9</sup> The sensory verb *see* appearing in Spread 4 is not, however, accompanied by a CPBP, and thus is irrelevant to the present study.

In the middle of the night, Hannah woke up and saw a very small parcel at the foot of the bed. It was a gorilla, but it was just a toy. (Spread 4)

The sensory verb *saw* contained in the underlined sentence introduces a present Hannah received from her father. Because the present is subsequently revealed in the double-underlined sentence, the underlined and double-underlined sentence are in the same narrative bit. Thus, the double-underlined part serves as a CPBP.

The CPBP, then, should represent a moment where some crucial event to the story is about to happen: specifically, an event related to the toy gorilla present. The left page of the next spread says “In the night something amazing happened” (Spread 5), giving notice of the upcoming amazing event. The right page of the same spread, then, illustrates that the toy gorilla has transformed into a real gorilla, which now stands close by at Hannah’s bedside (Hannah’s adventure has most likely transitioned into a dream state at this moment). The rest of the story is mostly devoted to the description of Hannah’s experiences with the real gorilla in her dream: they visit the zoo to see other gorillas, go to the movies, and so on (see Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: Ch. 6) for a detailed analysis on the interpretation of the story of *Gorilla*). The switch to the character’s viewpoint via the sensory verb, therefore, leads to a turning point in the story, from the real world to the dream world, and the narrative moves forward within the protagonist’s dream. Although not the climax of the tale, the use of a sensory verb still reflects an effect similar to the one discussed in the previous section.

### 5-3. *Kokko and Friends*

Now for a different, although related, use of sensory verbs involving a distinctive characteristic of picturebooks. Such a use can be observed in *Kokko and Friends*, originally written in Japanese. As the title of the book indicates, Kokko, a nursery school toddler, is a main character. She is so shy that she finds it difficult to make any friends, spending the day all alone in nursery school. However, a crucial event happens to Kokko, as shown in the following spreads:

(18) One day the teacher said, “I want each of you to choose a partner and join hands, two by two.”

<sup>10</sup> The original Japanese sentence corresponding to the underlined part is also in the imperative form, urging Kokko to look at the person in question. In addition, the Japanese sentences in Spread 4 sound, at least to me (Ikarashi), like the narrator is looking at Ami from a shared viewpoint with Kokko. If this is the case, Japanese sensory verbs as well as English ones can serve to introduce CPBPs and might have a similar

Kokko didn’t know what to do. Join hands? With who?!  
But look, Kokko, over there. Who’s that? (Spread 3)

(19) It’s Ami.

She’s all alone too, standing there fidgeting and wringing her fingers.

Ami can’t seem to find anyone to join hands with either. (Spread 4)

The sensory verb *look* appears in the underlined sentence in Spread 3. Unlike the sentences with sensory verbs dealt with so far, however, this sentence takes not a declarative, but rather an imperative form.<sup>10</sup> Notice here that the imperative is directed at Kokko specifically, urging her to look at the person referred to by *that*.<sup>11</sup> Given the narrator’s direction, it can be predicted that Kokko would soon recognize the new character in question; the CPBP should come immediately after the underlined sentence. The next spread, as in the case of *Bears in Beds*, provides what Kokko sees, or the CPBP from Kokko’s viewpoint. This interpretation receives conformation from the illustration on the right page of Spread 4. Almost all pictures in this book contain Kokko. On the other hand, the picture on Spread 4, similar to *Cock-a-Moo-Moo!* (Section 4.1.), uniquely does not contain Kokko. Instead, another main character, Ami, is shown from Kokko’s viewpoint. The image zeroes in on this new character in a rounded frame, with reduced illustration of the surrounding school environment compared to other pictures throughout the book, thus simulating the feeling of looking through Kokko’s eyes. In Spread 4, the text and the picture together help the reader adopt Kokko’s viewpoint.

If the text in Spread 4 functions as a CPBP introduced by the sensory verb from the prior sentence, its content should be crucially related to plot development. The story indeed develops in a new direction because of the appearance of Ami. After Spread 4, these two girls became friends and the story focuses on their time spent together in the nursery school. *Kokko and Friends* consists of 12 spreads in total, so the sensory verb appears at quite an early stage. However, it leads to the introduction of an essential character, Ami, in the greater development of Kokko’s story, which again adds favor to the proposal for the connection between sensory verbs, narrative viewpoint shifts, and story development.

distributional property to that proposed in (3). The investigation into Japanese sensory verbs, however, goes beyond the purpose of this paper. This issue, thus, is left for future research.

<sup>11</sup> Interactions between narrator and character are not rare in picturebooks. Such interactions show up now and then in Japanese picturebooks in particular (cf. Naruoka (2013)).

## 6. Other Functions of Sensory Verbs: Future Research

This paper thus far has dealt with the role of sensory verbs and their corresponding CPBPs in driving picturebook narratives. Of course, such features surely serve a number of functions beyond the limited scope of a single study. Interestingly enough, however, certain peripheral research observations have hinted that while sensory verbs do indeed appear in varying environments, some of these uses seem to share a similar function with those focused on in this paper. One picturebook in this vein involves the repeated use of a sensory verb followed by no CPBP nonetheless playing a central role in plot development. While this particular example involves a story told completely through dialogue without any narration, perhaps this introductory analysis can provide some basis for future research and the more comprehensive study of sensory verbs in picturebooks.

The story in the picturebook *I Want My Hat Back* begins with a monologue by a bear, the main character: “My hat is gone. I want it back.” (Spread 1). The bear then sets out asking several animals if they have seen his hat. For example, Spread 2 contains the dialogue between the bear and a fox<sup>12</sup>:

- (20) *Have you seen my hat?*  
No. I haven’t seen your hat.  
*OK. Thank you anyway.* (Spread 2)

Interestingly, while looking for his hat, the bear encounters a rabbit with a hat (which we learn later is actually the bear’s hat) on its head. Oblivious, the bear initiates the following exchange:

- (21) *Have you ever seen my hat?*  
No. Why are you asking me.  
I haven’t seen it.  
I haven’t seen any hats anywhere.  
I would not steal a hat.  
Don’t ask me any more questions.  
*OK. Thank you anyway.* (Spread 4)

The bear “saw” the rabbit with his hat on, but did not notice that the hat was his own. After parting with the rabbit, the bear continues on asking the same question of other animals up until Spread 8. In Spread 10, a deer comes to the depressed bear’s side and starts to talk with him, as follows:

- (22) What’s the matter?  
*I have lost my hat.*  
*And nobody has seen it.*  
What does your hat look like?  
*It is red and pointy and...* (Spread 9)

Notice that the underlined sentence contains what Taniguchi (1997) terms a copulative perception verb, i.e. *look*. Furthermore, keep in mind that all sentences here are character utterances, not narration. The underlined sentence, thus, is not followed by a CPBP. However, the use of this sensory verb seems to correspond to the introduction of a turning point in the story. Asked the underlined question, the bear starts to describe his hat, and then the following spread comes:

- (23) *I HAVE SEEN MY HAT.* (Spread 10)

In Spread 11, the bear finally remembers that he has indeed seen his hat. He then runs back to the rabbit who has stolen his hat and succeeds in getting it back from the rabbit. This plot development suggests that the copulative perception verb may have something to do with the introduction of the significant plot turn depicted in Spread 11.

As you may have noticed, this picturebook uses the sensory verb *see* repeatedly. This contrast between the recurring *see* and the sudden appearance of *look* could relate to the underlined sentence in Spread 10 having an effect on the quick change in the story’s pace. Rogers (1971: 206), for instance, points out that *see* “describes the act of more or less passive perception.” On the other hand, the copulative perception verb *look* describes an individual’s active involvement in perceiving copulative relation between subject and complement (cf. Honda (2005), Tokuyama (2015)). Before the underlined sentence in Spread 10, the use of *see* might imply that no one is truly actively involved in trying to find the bear’s hat. Hence his hat remains lost. However, the question posed by the deer in Spread 10 contains *look*, which now forces the bear to actively describe his hat. As a result, he thinks more carefully about his hat, ultimately remembering that he had seen his hat on the rabbit he spoke with earlier. Although a CPBP is not relevant in this example, it might be said that sensory verbs are here similarly utilized for the purpose of plot shifts and story development.

While a lone example, taken together with the results of this paper’s primary analysis, it would not be a stretch to assume the existence of other examples of picturebooks where sensory

<sup>12</sup> All italics in spreads mentioned from *I Want My Hat Back* are ours and represent lines of dialogue spoken by the bear. Non-italicized lines are spoken by the other animals mentioned in the text.

verbs (both with and without a corresponding CPBP) crucially contribute to plot development. Just to what degree picturebooks rely on such linguistic features in important narrative moments, however, requires much further investigation. Some other stories of note, simply as food for thought for now, include *The Best Present* and *Groompa's Kindergarten*. Both incorporate the sensory verb *feel*, followed by no CPBP, into their respective narratives. However, this verb, again, appears at a turning point in both tales. Thus this simple initial glimpse into other potential roles of sensory verbs in picturebooks, specifically those without a tandem CPBP, may similarly demonstrate some link to building towards a story's climax, or at the very least, cueing important zigs and zags in a story's plot at various points in a narrative. That said, as the score of this paper far from allows for such a comprehensive study, this issue must, for now, be left to future research.

## 7. Conclusion

Picturebooks usually consist of at least enough pages to tell a complete tale, which implies that the independent pages must be logically connected in order to understand the story development. Text (and of course visual images as well) can serve as a "glue" that brings these pages together (cf. Takeuchi (2002)). Some previous studies have pointed out certain linguistic strategies and devices which often contribute to connecting story elements from page to page. However, there seems to be, to our knowledge, no comprehensive or intensive study on such linguistic aspects in picturebooks. This means that much more exploration into the language of picturebooks are needed to make further advances in the study of picturebooks as a whole. As a springboard into such research, this paper has focused on sensory verbs and hypothesized that they play important roles in creating continuity from page to page. Specifically, adopting Wada's (2015) framework, which makes clear the mechanism responsible for the switch of viewpoint in third-person narratives, this paper proposes that this switch, via sensory verbs, from narrator to story character should occur around the point in the narrative immediately preceding a crucial stage in the plot. In typical cases, sensory verbs immediately followed by CPBPs introduce climatic events, as observed in *Cock-A-Moo-Moo!*, *Guess How Much I Love You*, and so on. However, sensory verbs are not limited to such cases; they also introduce crucial events to plot development in earlier stages in narratives, as observed in *Curious George*, and appear in several other environments.

Interestingly, sensory verbs in these varied environments may, in some situations, indeed serve a similar function to those that introduce CPBPs. This paper briefly picked up one example

(i.e. *I Want My Hat Back*), and analyzed it with considerations to findings from previous studies on sensory verbs. There yet remains a great deal to consider and critique in confidently codifying a comprehensive consensus concerning the full functionality of sensory verbs in picturebooks; however, this analysis, we hope, has opened some specific pathways forward for future research.

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