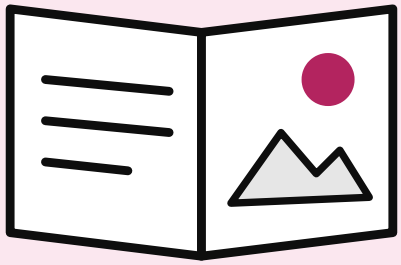
Concept

# Text/image interaction

The ways words and pictures share the meaning of a page: from repeating the same thing to expanding each other, telling different things, or contradicting each other.



In Spanish
*Relación entre texto e imagen*

Origin
Nikolajeva and Scott (2000)

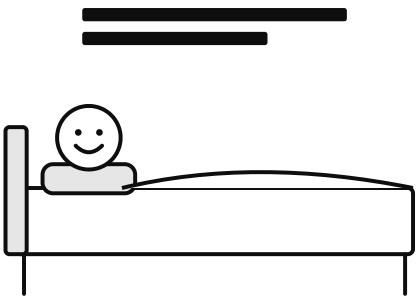
## What problem it addresses

It explains why an illustrated page can say more than its text, or something different. When illustrating, design decides which part of the message the picture carries and which part the words carry.

## An example

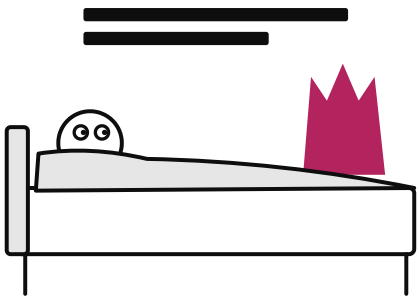
An illustrative example: the same sentence, "Ana says she isn't scared," with two different drawings.

### A picture that repeats



Ana smiles, calm, in her bed. **Text and picture say the same thing.**

### A picture that contradicts



Ana hides under the blanket and stares at a shadow on the wall. **The picture gives the text the lie.**

With the same words, the second page tells another story: Ana is putting on a brave face. Whoever looks finds out from the drawing, not from the text.

## Why it happens

1

**The text tells one part,** what is read or heard.

2

**The picture tells another,** what is seen on the page.

3

**The reader puts the two together** and fills the gap or notices the clash between them.

## Applications in design

### Use it like this

Before illustrating, mark what the text already says and decide what the picture will do: repeat it, expand it, or tell something else.

### Avoid

Letting the picture contradict the text by accident: one changed detail confuses whoever is looking.

### Don't fall for it

If you want the picture to contradict the text, leave clear clues so it reads as intentional.

## 17% and 33%

Preschoolers

Adults

### What the research says

Share of eye fixations that landed on the print while reading picturebooks: preschoolers and adults, measured with eye tracking (An, Wang and Sun, 2017).

●●○ **Debated evidence.** Evans and Saint-Aubin (2005) had already found that, while an adult reads aloud, preschoolers barely look at the print. For them, the picture is almost the whole page.

## Connections

Used in

- Picturebook
- Comic contracts
- Editorial design

Related to

- Denotation and connotation

# Authors and works

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2000 | **Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott** | Sorted the relationships between words and pictures in picturebooks: symmetrical, enhancing, complementary, counterpointing, and contradictory. |
| 2017 | **An, Wang and Sun** | Used eye tracking to measure how much children and adults look at print and at pictures when reading picturebooks. |

## Sources

### Original sources


- Nikolajeva, M., & Scott, C. (2000). The dynamics of picturebook communication. Children's Literature in Education, 31(4), 225–239.
- An, L., Wang, Y., & Sun, Y. (2017). Reading words or pictures: Eye movement patterns in adults and children differ by age group and receptive language ability. Frontiers in Psychology, 8, 791. View source (https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00791)
- Evans, M. A., & Saint-Aubin, J. (2005). What children are looking at during shared storybook reading. Psychological Science, 16(11), 913–920. View source (https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2005.01636.x)


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