

**A SEMIO-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED ILLUSTRATIONS IN
'THE TIN-POT FOREIGN GENERAL AND THE OLD IRON WOMAN'
PICTURE BOOK**

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Abstract

Limited research has examined picture books through semiotic and pragmatic lenses, particularly using Peirce's semiotic theory and Yule's pragmatic theory. This study aims to explore the content of picture book by identifying signs in the selected illustrations in the 'Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman' picture book by analyzing the relationship between signs and their referents, and uncovering the speech acts within the illustrations. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, applying Peirce's semiotic theory for visual analysis and Yule's pragmatic theory for verbal analysis. The study identified a range of signs, including icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons resembled their referents, indexes indicated causal relationships, and symbols were linked to cultural interpretations. The primary speech act identified was the representative illocutionary act, used to convey information and describe conditions in the illustrations. Both direct and indirect speech acts were present in the narrative. This research highlights the complexity and depth of picture book content and demonstrates the value of a semio-pragmatic approach in analyzing children's literature.

Keywords: Picture book; Pragmatic; Semiotic

Introduction

Since the publication of the first illustrated book for young children in 1675, picture books have been fundamental to children's education. They not only provide an engaging and enjoyable shared activity for parents and children but also foster social literacy with lasting effects on young readers. Picture books encourage a natural affinity for reading and help students deepen their understanding of the world, making meaningful connections to the material they study.

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Additionally, they capture students' attention and introduce them to new, engaging topics (Ciecierski et al., 2017).

Picture books combine two sign systems—visual images and written language—to create a unique reading experience. Each sign system offers a distinct perspective on cultural meanings, contributing to the overall narrative through their interaction. Written texts describe characters, actions, environments, and plot developments, while visual images depict these elements, resulting in a dependent and interdependent relationship that alters the meaning of both (Maderazo et al., 2010). When accompanied by visual images, reading demands both verbal and visual literacy, which involves interpreting messages conveyed through images and fostering a visual thought process (Kana, 2019). This dual literacy enhances literary skills, nurtures imagination, and facilitates the expression of personal interpretations. Picture books offer opportunities for readers to develop visual literacy by allowing them to revisit and analyze the illustrations, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of literature and an appreciation of visual communication (Short, 2004).

Despite the educational impact of picture books, research has often overlooked the content itself, focusing instead on their use in the classroom (Segall, 2004). This study, therefore, analyses picture books through the lens of semiotics and pragmatics.

Semiotics, broadly defined as the study of signs. It explores how meanings are created and how realities are represented (Chandler, 2007). Signs are anything that can be a substitute for something else, and that something else does not necessarily need to exist or be present. Semiotics include visual, verbal, tactile, and olfactory signs; all signs that are accessible and can be perceived by all of the senses, when signs tightly bind in a systematic way, it can convey a message or information (Muhassin, 2017). However, these things must have inherent meaning and only become signs when we imbue them with meaning. Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as having a specific meaning. We interpret things as signs primarily unconsciously by relating them to the familiar systems of convention (Chandler, 2007). Among semiotic theories, this study employs Charles Sanders Peirce's framework, which defines a sign as something that stands for something else and creates meaning in the mind of the interpreter. Peirce categorizes signs based on their relationship with their objects: icons resemble their objects, symbols rely on agreed-upon conventions, and indexes have a causal relationship with their objects (Peirce, 2012).

In addition to analyzing visual elements through semiotics, this research examines verbal texts in picture books using a pragmatic approach, particularly Yule's speech act theory. Pragmatics studies language usage and the social context in which language is produced. Yule defines pragmatics as the study of meaning as conveyed by the speaker and understood by the listener, emphasizing the speaker's intent rather than the literal meanings of words. Pragmatics involves interpreting language within specific contexts, considering non-verbal communication, and understanding the influence of physical and emotional proximity between communicators (Yule, 1996).

The theory of speech acts begins with the premise that the smallest unit of human communication is not a sentence or other expression, but rather the performance of certain acts, such as making statements, asking questions, issuing commands, describing, explaining, apologizing, thanking, congratulating, etc. (Yule, 1996). The theory identifies three types of acts: locutionary (the production of meaningful expressions), illocutionary (the performance of an act with a communicative purpose), and perlocutionary (the effect of the utterance on the listener). Illocutionary acts, such as representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, are performed with the intention of affecting the listener beyond mere comprehension. Speech acts can be categorized as direct or indirect, depending on the relationship between the speech's structure and its communicative function.

The research on semio-pragmatic is interesting, because it was done in two different approaches, semiotic and pragmatic, and deals with two different sign systems namely visual images and written text. There are several previous studies that deals with semio-pragmatic in different contexts, such as in the use of visual and verbal data in World Health Organization's

Public Service Advertisement (Muhassin, 2022) and Lifestyle Meme (Sari, 2018). Muhassin (2022) found out that there are two linguistic elements as poster-forming elements, namely visual and verbal elements. Through icons, indexes, and symbols, visual elements reinforce the meaning of the poster's theme so that it can be easily understood by readers. While, verbal elements are realized by the directive speech to facilitate understanding of the intended messages as well as indirective speech to consider politeness in delivering messages. Meanwhile the study by Christine Permata Sari (2018) has learned that the image and caption have a significant role in creating interpretation and were completing and supporting each other. To obtain the meaning of memes, the theory of speech act, implicature, and verbal humor was applied, and the result was the type of speech act frequently appeared in memes is assertive since one of the purposes of creating a meme is to inform the social phenomenon occurred in society.

This study addressed a notable gap in the existing literature by centering in the analysis of picture book, which differs significantly from previous studies, making this research is both unique and valuable in extending the understanding of semiotic and pragmatic in a different context. Furthermore, this study also incorporated visual grammar theory in order to describe what is happening in the illustrations.

Methods

This research utilizes a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the data in depth. Qualitative descriptive studies are particularly effective in addressing research questions related to the who, what, where, and how of events or experiences, allowing for an in-depth analysis that uncovers patterns within the data (Haradhan, 2018). The decision to use a qualitative approach is rooted in the need for a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, something that quantitative methods and statistical analyses cannot provide. This approach is essential for capturing the complex nature of the issues being studied (Creswell, 2007).

In this research, the focus is on analyzing the signs and speech acts found in the selected illustrations of *The Tin-Pot Foreign General* and *The Old Iron Woman* picture book, as well as exploring the relationships between these signs and the objects they represent. The primary data for this study comes directly from the picture book itself, while secondary data is drawn from relevant books, academic articles, journals, and other sources that support the primary analysis.

The research employs the documentation method to gather data, specifically selecting illustrations based on the criterion that each illustration must contain all three types of signs—icon, index, and symbol—according to Peirce's semiotic theory. Additionally, the illustrations were chosen to ensure a balanced interaction between verbal and visual modes, which is crucial for analyzing the multimodal text's semiotic and pragmatic aspects.

Following data collection, the analysis was conducted using Peirce's semiotic framework to interpret the relationships between the signs and their referents, identifying the roles of icons, indexes, and symbols within the visual data. Concurrently, a pragmatic analysis was applied to the verbal data, focusing on the identification of five types of illocutionary acts, as well as the structure and function of the speech acts. By integrating these two analytical frameworks, the research offers a more comprehensive understanding of the picture book's content, elucidating how visual and verbal elements work together to convey the book's messages.

Findings and Discussion

The primary discourse analyzed in this study is derived from *The Tin-pot Foreign General* and *The Old Iron Woman* picture book, which portrays the futile conflict between Argentina and Great Britain over the Falkland Islands, resulting in the loss of numerous lives. The picture book features two central characters: the "Tin-Pot Foreign General," representing the Argentine military junta, particularly General Leopoldo Galtieri, and the "Old Iron Woman," symbolizing British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. These characters serve as symbolic representations of the political leaders during the Falklands War, offering a satirical and critical perspective on the political decisions and actions of both nations. The book delves into themes of nationalism, militarism, and the repercussions of armed conflict.

This study focuses on three specific illustrations from the picture book, providing a detailed analysis of the speech acts and signs within these images.

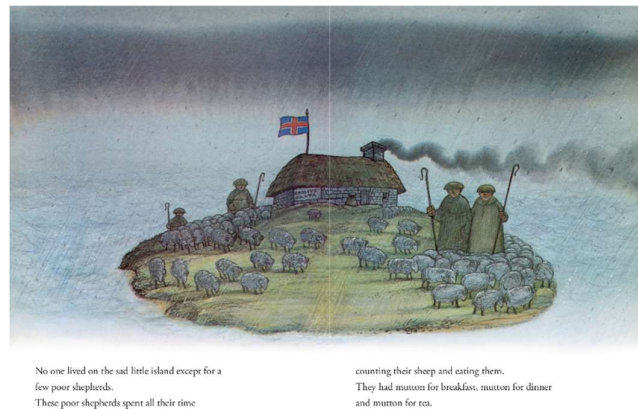


Figure 1. The Illustrations of The Sad Little Island

Figure 1 presents an illustration of the Falkland Islands before the conflict, referred to in the picture book as "the sad little island." The image depicts the living conditions of the island's residents, who are shown as impoverished shepherds living with their livestock. The narrative text accompanying the illustration implies that the island lacks abundant resources, leaving the shepherds to rely primarily on their sheep for sustenance. The illustration employs a simple and minimalist drawing style, with the island's tiny size exaggerated relative to its inhabitants, emphasizing the absurdity of the dispute over this territory. The absence of a visible horizon further underscores the island's geographical remoteness, while the cool and dark ambience reinforces the melancholic tone conveyed by the phrase "the sad little island."

This illustration contains multiple signs that can be classified as icons, indexes, and symbols, which work together to enhance the reader's understanding of the scene. The iconic signs are represented by images that resemble their reference objects (Peirce, 2012), such as the house and sheep. These signs align with Peirce's concept of firstness, which concerns the potential for meaning or action and the basic qualities of being, feeling, and perception (Mittelberg, 2019). In isolation, these signs create an immediate interpretant in the viewer's mind, representing the actual objects depicted—the house and the sheep.

The indexical signs in the illustration include the shepherds, the smoke rising from the chimney, the water ripples in the surrounding sea, and the dark clouds overhead. An indexical sign indicates the physical presence of its object by being directly influenced by it (Peirce, 2012), corresponding to Peirce's notion of secondness, which involves actual existence, experience, action, and reaction (Mittelberg, 2019). The depiction of the shepherds, dressed in traditional smock-frocks, hats, and carrying shepherd's crooks, serves as an indexical sign of their occupation. The image of water ripples and dark clouds suggests the presence of rain, while the smoke coming from the chimney indicates that a fire is burning inside the house.

The symbolic sign in the illustration is represented by the British flag, which symbolizes the island's British sovereignty. A symbol, in Peirce's concept of thirdness, signifies its object through a conventional or learned association (Mittelberg, 2019). The presence of the British flag in the illustration indicates that the island is under British control, signifying its status as part of the United Kingdom.

The verbal elements in the illustration were analyzed using Yule's pragmatic theory, focusing on speech acts and the distinction between direct and indirect speech acts. Sentences like "No one lived on the sad little island except for a few poor shepherds," "These poor shepherds spent all day counting and eating their sheep," and "They had mutton for breakfast, mutton for dinner, and mutton for tea" are examples of declarative direct speech acts with a representative illocutionary force. These statements serve to inform and describe the living conditions of the island's inhabitants, effectively conveying the narrative's intended message.

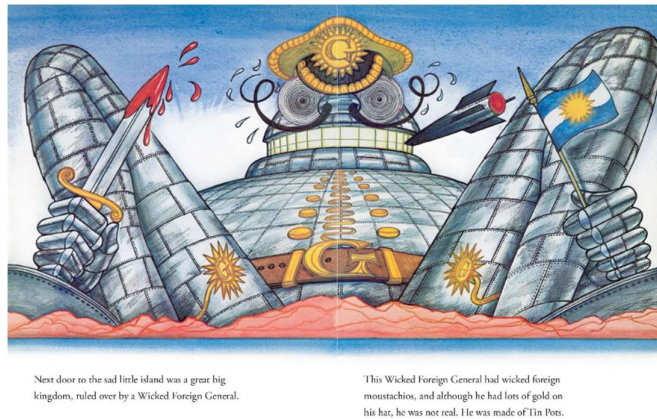


Figure 2. The Illustration of The Wicked Foreign General

Figure 2 presents an illustration of the Tin-Pot Foreign General. The illustration showed a sharply-drawn "Wicked Foreign General" made of tin pots. This illustration is detailed, occupying the entire page, and portrays the general's intense gaze from a high vantage point. The ambience of the illustration appears more vibrant due to the contrasts between the crimson rocks beneath him with the cool blue sky above, vibrant blood spatters on his dagger, and gold accents on his uniform. The illustration depicted The Tin-Pot Foreign General as a formidable and menacing figure. The Tin-Pot Foreign General's glaring eyes down at us evoked the chilling sensation of being threatened by a formidable figure.

The iconic sign in Figure 2 is represented by the Tin-Pot Foreign General himself. An icon is formed by means of which the signifier is perceived as approximating or imitating the signified. Evidently resembling it in appearance, tone, texture, flavor, or aroma. It was perceived as being similar because it possessed a portion of the quality of the object. For example, like a portrait, a cartoon, a scale-model, etc. (Chandler, 2007). This illustration functions as an icon because it closely resembles General Leopoldo Galtieri of the Argentine Military Junta during the Falklands War, capturing distinguishing features such as his distinctive mustache and military uniform.

Indexical signs in Figure 2 include the general's military uniform and the blood on his dagger. Indexes establish a direct relationship with their referent through a causal or physical connection. The military uniform acts as an index by visually indicating the general's military status. The blood on the dagger signifies recent violence, linking the sign (blood) directly to its referent (violence).

The symbolic sign in the illustration is the Argentine flag held by the general. Symbols signify their referents through conventional or learned associations rather than resemblance (Chandler, 2007). The Argentine flag symbolizes the nation and its attributes, indicating the general's association with Argentina as its military commander.

From a pragmatic perspective, the sentence "Next door to the sad little island was a great big kingdom ruled over by a wicked foreign general" is a declarative direct speech act with representative illocutionary force, providing information about the kingdom and its ruler while emphasizing the general's malignancy. The sentences "This wicked foreign general had a wicked foreign *moustachios*, and although he had lots of gold on his head, he was not real, he was made of tin pots" incorporate both direct and indirect speech acts. The initial clause is a declarative direct speech act with representative illocutionary force, describing the general's appearance and characteristics. The latter part, "He was made of tin pots," employs an indirect speech act to metaphorically describe the general's non-real, and fictitious nature.

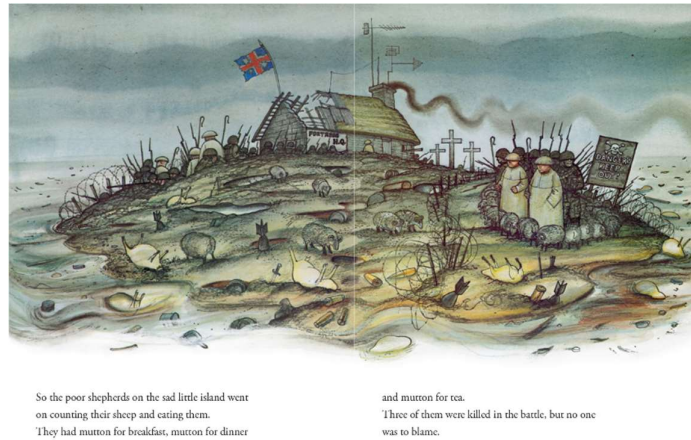


Figure 3. The Illustration of Island Post-War

Figure 3 illustrates the devastated state of the island post-conflict, highlighting the severe contrast with its pre-war condition as depicted in Figure 1. Unlike the minimalistic style of Figure 1, Figure 3 features an enlarged depiction of the island to emphasize its damaged state. The illustration's jagged lines and fragmented appearance symbolize the destruction caused by the conflict, while the muted and dark tones evoke a sense of desolation and ruin.

The iconic signs in this illustration include the figures of shepherds, soldiers, sheep, and sheep carcasses scattered across the island. These icons closely resemble real-life entities such as soldiers, shepherds, and livestock, depicting their professions and existence. Additionally, the sheep carcasses function as indexical signs, representing the aftermath and evidence of their previous presence.

Indexical signs in Figure 3 are represented by weapons, a collapsed house, and graves. The illustrations of guns, missiles, daggers, and bullets signify violence and warfare, indicating the presence of conflict. The damaged house and smoke from its chimney denote destruction and ongoing fire-related activity, respectively. Graves act as tangible markers of death and the impact of the tragic events on the island's inhabitants.

Symbolic signs are represented by the shattered flags and danger signs in the illustration. The danger sign universally denotes threats or hazardous conditions, while the shattered flag symbolizes disruption, loss, or suffering. The broken British flag specifically conveys the high cost of maintaining control over the island, reflecting extensive casualties and devastation despite retaining sovereignty.

Pragmatically, the sentences "So the poor shepherds on the sad little island went on counting the sheep and eating them" and "They had mutton for breakfast, mutton for dinner, and mutton for tea" function as declarative direct speech acts with representative illocutionary force. They describe the shepherds' continued daily routine despite the war's aftermath, reflecting the narrative of pre-war conditions. The sentence "Three of them were killed in the battle, but no one was to blame" is also a declarative direct speech act with representative illocutionary force, detailing battle casualties and the notion of unaccountability. This sentence additionally serves as an indirect speech act, implying that while civilian losses occurred, accountability or retribution from those in authority is not deemed justified, underscoring the perceived insignificance of these losses compared to achieving victory.

This study aimed to analyze the semiotic and pragmatic elements in *The Tin-pot Foreign General* and *The Old Iron Woman* picture book, focusing on three specific illustrations that encapsulated the narrative's critique of the Falklands War. Using Peirce's semiotic and Yule's pragmatic theoretical framework, the findings reveal how the visual and textual components of the picture book work in tandem to convey complex socio-political messages.

The findings uncover the use of several types of signs, namely icons, indexes, and symbols. Broadly speaking, iconic signs are represented by images of people and objects that resemble

their referent object. The iconic signs in this case took place in the form of the depiction of shepherds, soldiers, and sheep. These icons play a crucial role in immediately connecting the reader to the real-world objects they represent, such as the shepherd's daily life in the island and the soldiers involved in the conflict. The use of iconic signs is essential as it facilitates a straightforward understanding of the story while also keeping it close to the reality.

The study also identified several indexical signs, such as the depiction of weapons, collapsed house, and graves. These signs provide evidence of the conflict's impact, serving as tangible traces of violence and destruction that ensued. This use of indexical signs effectively conveys the cause-and-effect relationship within the narrative, making the consequences of the conflict more palpable to the readers.

Symbolisms are also prevalent throughout the illustrations, with elements such as the shattered British flag in figure 3 which serves as a powerful representation of national identity and the cost of war. The flag, as a symbol, transcends its physical depiction, conveying deeper meanings related to defeat, loss, and the enduring impact of the conflict on national pride. The symbolic representation of Argentine flag held by The Tin-Pot Foreign General in figure 2 similarly underscores the character's association with the nation, highlighting the interplay between personal identity and national allegiance. These symbolic signs are integral to the book's satirical critique, offering readers a means to engage with abstract political and social concepts through familiar imagery.

The pragmatic analysis further elucidates how the picture book's narrative texts reinforce visual elements. The declarative direct speech act functioned as representative illocutionary act, which is the most common speech act used in the narrative text, provides factual descriptions that set the stage for the readers understanding of the life in the island. Moreover, the indirect speech act embedded in the text offers a more nuanced critique. The combination of direct and indirect speech acts thus enriches the narrative, allowing for multiple layers of interpretation and inviting critical engagement from the readers.

The integration of semiotic and pragmatic analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how *The Tin-Pot Foreign General* and *The Old Iron Woman* conveys its message. The semiotic elements lay the foundation for the narrative's visual storytelling, while the pragmatic elements enhance this by adding depth to the verbal communication. Together, these elements work synergistically to deliver a powerful critique of the Falklands War, highlighting the absurdity and tragedy of the conflict.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the effectiveness of a semio-pragmatic approach in analyzing *The Tin-Pot Foreign General* and *The Old Iron Woman*. By examining the interplay between visual signs and verbal communication, the research has uncovered the intricate ways in which the picture book critiques the Falklands War. The findings underscore the importance of considering both semiotic and pragmatic elements in literary analysis, particularly in works that engage with complex social and political themes. The meanings that the picture book is trying to convey can be easily understood by the reader due to the use of visual elements in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols which connect the sign with the object it represents. In addition to visual elements, the verbal elements in the form of narrative texts reinforce the visual elements. Direct and indirect speech acts within the narrative text further support the semiotic signs, making their relationship dependent and interdependent. By applying a semio-pragmatic approach, educators and researchers can gain deeper insights into how visual and textual elements work together to communicate complex ideas to young readers. This approach can be particularly valuable in educational settings, where picture books are often used to introduce children to difficult concepts in a manner that is both accessible and engaging. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of picture books as a medium for social and political commentary. *The Tin-Pot Foreign General* and *The Old Iron Woman* picture book serves as a powerful example of how children's literature can address serious issues such as war, nationalism, and the

consequences of political decisions. As such, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how picture books can be used to foster critical thinking and social awareness in young readers.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is subjected to a limitation by its focus on examining three selected illustrations in a single picture book. Therefore, it is advisable that future researchers Conduct similar semio-pragmatic analyses on a broader collection of illustrations or texts. Exploring a wider range of visual media can provide more comprehensive insights and validate the findings of this research. Furthermore, future researchers can also investigate other classification of sign based on Peirce's trichotomies of sign, or can also explore other semiotic and pragmatic theories presented by different experts. Compare and contrast these with Peirce's and Yule's theories to identify unique strengths and potential areas for integration or further study.

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