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Exploring the Literary Element ‘Mood’ in an Award-Winning Malaysian Picturebook: A Multimodal Analysis

Komathy Senathy Rajah
Cecilia Yin Mei Cheong*

Department of English Language, Faculty of Language and Linguistics, Universiti
Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

Abstract

This article examines how an award-winning Malaysian picturebook for young learners entitled ‘The Magic Buffalo’ by Jainal Amambing utilizes visual and textual semiotic resources to develop the literary element ‘mood’. Knowledge of visual and textual meaning-making systems is necessary as it will enable young learners to achieve a deeper understanding of the literary element ‘mood’ in multimodal texts and also be visually literate. The literary element ‘mood’ is chosen because it helps to create the atmosphere and meaning of a story. In addition, this knowledge will also prepare young learners to deal with emotions in real life. The analysis is based on an adaptation of Painter et al.’s multimodal discourse analysis framework. The results of this study revealed that facial expression is the most prominent visual affect utilized in this picturebook, followed by bodily stance and ambiance respectively. The textual analysis reveals that the main character experiences an ongoing mental state, and un/happiness is the most commonly found emotion. The intermodal cohesion analysis clearly highlights how visual choices enhance the meaning provided by the textual choices. The use of visual symbols, facial expressions, and body posture help to corroborate and escalate the textual description of the characters’ emotional states. The study suggests that knowledge of visual and textual meaning systems will help young learners to critically analyse the literary element ‘mood’ and decode the meaning of multimodal texts.

* Corresponding author, email: ceciliac@um.edu.my

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literature in English is given a major role through the Language Arts module in the Primary Schools Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (or *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah*, abbreviated as KSSR) in Malaysian ESL classrooms. Literary elements are important concepts of literature, and they are essential to making meaning of stories. Some of the literary elements that are commonly focused on in the primary ESL literature classrooms are character, setting, plot, mood, and theme. Sound knowledge of literary elements will enable readers to better understand the flow of a story and critically examine its underlying meaning. The selection of literary texts is also an important aspect that must be considered when introducing literature to young learners in primary schools. The language and cultural aspects used in these texts must be manageable and appropriate for young learners because only then will they be attracted to reading them (Subramaniam et al., 2003; Koss, 2015).

This study focuses mainly on the literary element ‘mood’ which is the emotional tone or feelings pervading a literary work which fosters the readers’ expectations as to the course of events, whether happy, terrifying, or disastrous (Abrams, 1999). Studies have shown that reading multimodal texts enable young learners to analyse moods as conveyed via visuals and experience a wide range of emotions (Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Ghosn, 2013). Mood aids in making meaning in stories as readers experience a gamut of feelings like happiness, woe, excitement, terror, or joy while reading. This experience may be two-fold in multimodal texts as mood can be conveyed via words, design elements, and visual elements. The visuals or illustrations in multimodal texts help to strengthen young learners’ textual understanding of ‘mood’ while the written words establish mood when the overall emotional impression reaches the readers. A visual image is governed by spatiality and composition, while the written text is governed by temporal sequence (Kress, 2003).

Mood is a challenging literary element for young learners to comprehend and for teachers to teach because it can be subjective. Studies have shown that multimodal texts can provide young learners with better experience and understanding of literary elements as visuals play a major role in them (Martinez & Harmon, 2012; Wooten & Cullinan, 2015). Young learners may relate psychologically to the visual representations of emotions in picturebooks or graphic novels because they may share similar real-life happenings or they may have encountered similar experiences while reading other print-based works of fiction (Dallacqua, 2012; Nikolajeva, 2013). Additionally, young learners may understand or experience the literary element ‘mood’ easily if they are first introduced to picturebooks written and illustrated by Malaysians as this will not only engage them but also provide them with a familiar setting and a pragmatic worldview. Hence, more research that looks at the visual-textual relationship in picturebooks from the perspective of the literary element ‘mood’ using a specific framework is warranted.

Studies focusing specifically on the multimodal analysis of literary elements in Malaysian picturebooks are very limited as most of them focus on readability, gender, or comics (Abdullah, 2015; Rajendra, 2018). The present study has attempted to fill in

the gaps by examining an award-winning Malaysian picturebook. The study is aimed at addressing the following research questions:

1. How is the literary element 'mood' represented visually in a Malaysian picturebook?
2. How is the literary element 'mood' represented textually in a Malaysian picturebook?
3. How do the visual and textual meaning systems cohere to develop the literary element 'mood' in a Malaysian picturebook?

Thus, the objective of this study is to explore the choices used by the writer-illustrator to convey the literary element 'mood' in an award-winning Malaysian picturebook via both visual and textual semiotic resources. Another objective of this study is to examine the ways these meanings are created through the interplay between the two semiotic modes. This study adapts [Kress and van Leeuwen's \(2006\)](#) Grammar of Visual Design for the visual analysis while [Halliday and Matthiessen's \(2004\)](#) Systemic Functional Linguistics, and [Martin and White's \(2005\)](#) Appraisal frameworks are adapted for the textual analysis. Finally, [Painter et al.'s \(2013\)](#) Multimodal Discourse Analysis framework is utilized to examine the ways visual and textual meaning systems intertwine and work together in an award-winning Malaysian picturebook to develop the literary element 'mood'.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The emotional feelings that readers experience while viewing visuals and reading words in literary texts are defined as the literary element 'mood'. A fairy tale can transport readers to a fantasy land while a thriller can make their hearts race in fear. These emotions that readers face and experience when reading picturebooks can be analysed visually and textually.

2.1 Visual Analysis of Mood

Two semiotic resources that are used to convey mood visually in picturebooks are ambiance (colours) and visual affect. Studies have shown that colours play an important role in conveying and determining the emotional setting or mood of a picturebook story ([Kurt & Osueke, 2014](#); [Painter, 2008](#); [Wooten & Cullinan, 2015](#)). Illustrators often select and use specific colour palettes for each illustration in their picturebook as it helps to invoke different moods ([Wooten & Cullinan, 2015](#)). The intensity of colours used in each illustration also helps to convey the literary element 'mood' ([Temple et al., 2011, p. 80](#)). Similarly, young learners and college students associate emotions and personal experiences with colours ([Kurt & Osueke, 2014](#)), and their paintings or drawings often reflect this.

Similarly, aspects of visual affect like facial expressions, bodily stance, and gestures also contribute to the development of the literary element 'mood' in picturebooks ([Martinez & Harmon, 2012](#); [Nikolajeva, 2013](#)). Facial expressions, gestures, and postures "have been recognized as an important modality for non-verbal communication and enable us to determine an individual's mental and emotional state as well as his or her attitude/character traits" ([Tan & Nareyek, 2009, p. 23](#)).

2.1.1 Ambience

The ambience of a story is mainly portrayed through colours, a characteristic mode, because it has the ability to combine freely with other semiotic modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002). However, colours can only coexist in a multimodal setting. Although most visuals in picturebooks are multi-coloured, a few picturebook illustrators prefer to use only black and white in their work. The different choices in colour which are commonly deployed by picturebook illustrators are exemplified in Figure 1. Activated ambience indicates the presence of colour and constitutes three components mainly vibrancy, warmth, and familiarity which are active concurrently in visuals.

Vibrancy or saturation is denoted by two aspects: vibrant and muted. Vibrant colours are highly saturated and often help to create an ambience of joy or excitement. Muted colours, on the other hand, help to create gentle or calm feelings. Warmth is represented by warm and cool colours, and these colours help to signal the emotion of the characters and also the temperature of the environment. Familiarity has two components: familiar and removed. A familiar ambience often depicts a range of familiar colours while removed colours have fewer variations.

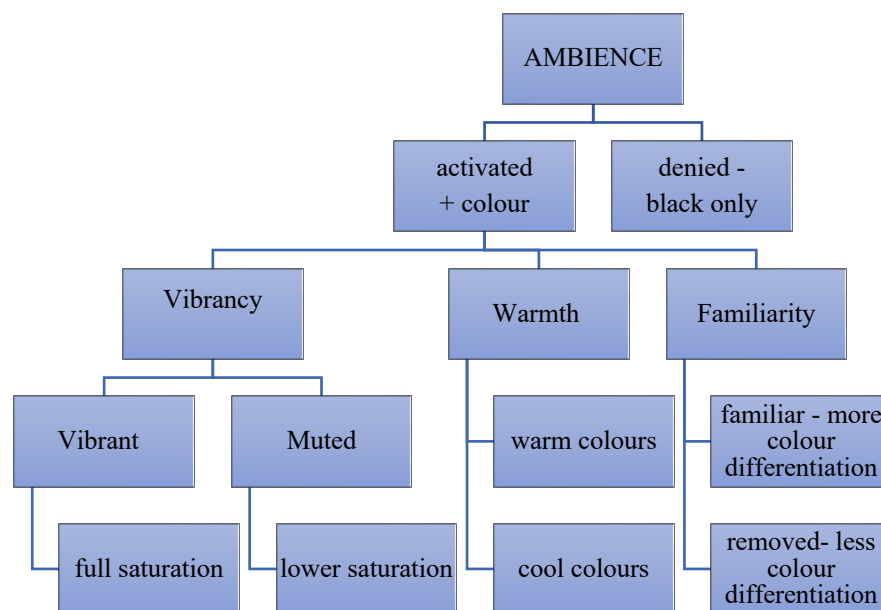


Figure 1. Choices in ambience (adapted from Painter et al. (2013)).

2.1.2 Visual affect

The visuals in most picturebooks focus on fundamental emotions like anger, fear, and joy because these emotions are general and independent of verbal language. These basic emotions are manifested physically through aspects of visual affect like body language, facial expressions, gestures, and postures (Nikolajeva, 2013; Painter et al., 2013; Tan & Nareyek, 2009), and they are often combined to portray the range of emotions experienced by the characters. Aspects of visual affect are important modality elements for non-verbal communication as they not only display a person's attitude or traits but also their mental and emotional states. Nevertheless, certain nuances of emotions like anguish, distress, and agony cannot be conveyed

convincingly through visuals. Figure 2 illustrates a summary of the variable in the visual affect analysis of images within the literary element mood.

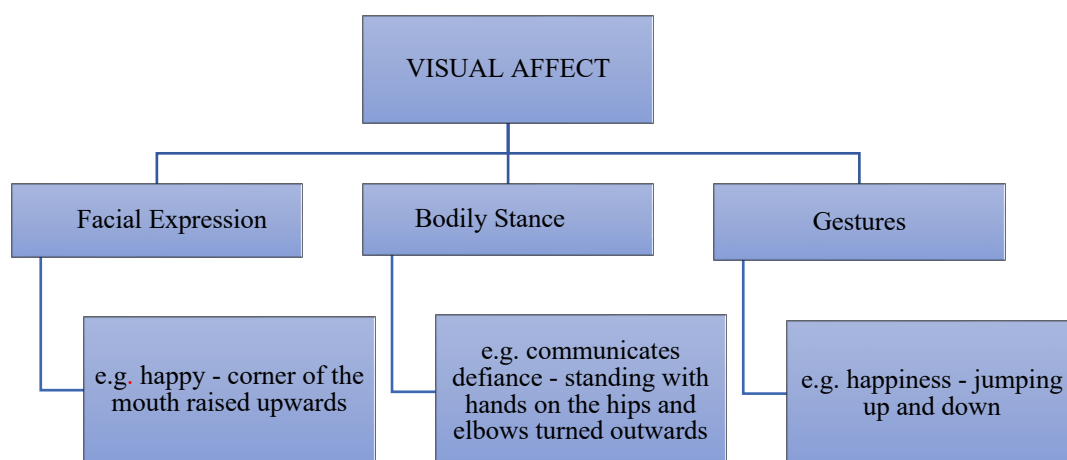


Figure 2. Visual affect in picturebooks (adapted from Painter et al. (2013)).

Facial expressions, bodily stance, and gestures are three aspects of visual affect that work together to convey the literary element ‘mood’. Facial expressions are expressed through body parts from the head region. The combination of eyebrows, nose, cheek, mouth, and lips helps to convey the different moods of an individual. Alternatively, the bodily stance is related to the whole body and is usually associated with a person’s manner of sitting and standing. An individual’s posture or bodily stance can help to convey his or her emotional state of mind. Alternatively, gestures are movements made with body parts, such as hands, arms, legs, and head.

2.2 Textual Analysis of Mood

The literary element ‘mood’ is created by tone and emotions found in a written text. Literary text writers employ emotive language, which can be implicitly or explicitly conveyed, to create a certain mood in their readers’ minds. The analysis of emotional language from the totality of the written text helps to identify the overall mood of a story.

The representation of the literary element ‘mood’ in written texts is analysed using Attitude, a system of meaning that looks at the mapping of the feelings. Attitude is one of the three categories of the Appraisal framework (Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; Ngo & Unsworth, 2015). Attitude provides a systematic account of language resources for expressing emotions. The other two categories of the Appraisal framework are Engagement and Graduation. Engagement looks at the sources of evaluation and the play of voices within and across texts while Graduation looks at the development of both Attitude and the degree of Engagement (Ngo & Unsworth, 2015, p. 3).

There are three aspects of Attitude: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation (Martin & White, 2005). Judgment consists of language resources for evaluating people’s behaviours, while Appreciation deals with the evaluation of ‘things’. This study only focuses on the third aspect of Attitude which is Affect as it looks at the emotional evaluation of an entity, process, or stage of affairs (refer to Figure 3). The textual meaning potentials of (verbal) affect are realized through the emotional language used

(Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; Painter et al., 2013). Affect can be expressed implicitly (invoked) or explicitly (inscribed) as positive or negative.

2.2.1 Verbal affect

Verbal affect deals with language resources for expressing emotions (Martin & White, 2005). Figure 3 illustrates the three major sets of emotions in the Affect system that help to convey a character's positive and negative feelings like un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. Affect can be realized as 'qualities' (happy), 'processes' (pleased), or 'comments' (happily) and it can be implicitly or explicitly stated using emotional language which is relayed through the choice of words that can either elicit or influence one's feelings.

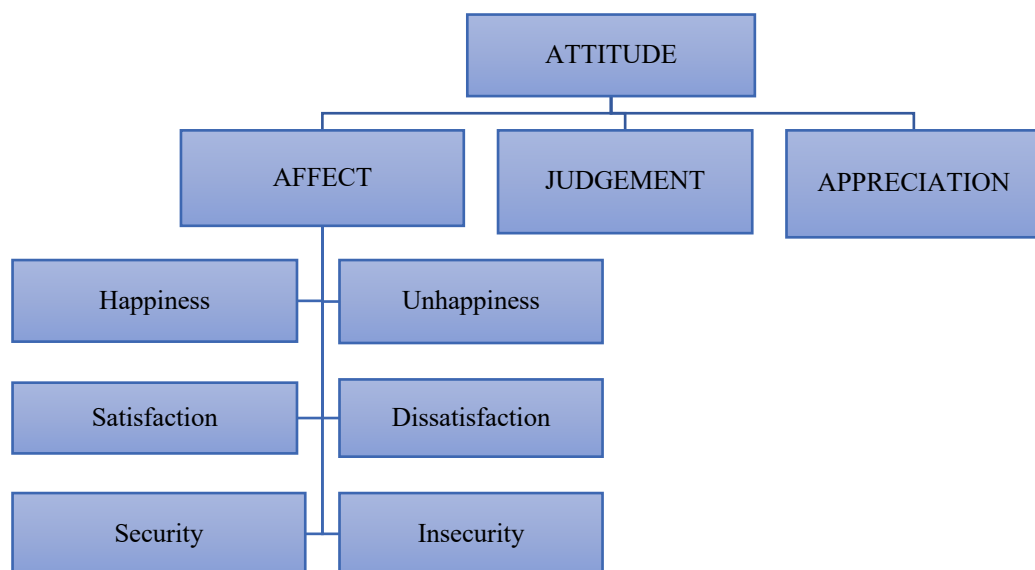


Figure 3. Types of verbal affect to describe the literary element 'mood' (adapted from Martin & White (2005)).

3. METHODS

This study employed an analytical approach which is qualitative in nature as this would allow descriptive examples and new perspectives in the discussion.

3.1 Data

The data used in this study comes from two sources, the picturebook and an interview with the writer and illustrator of the book. The primary data is a Malaysian picturebook "The Magic Buffalo" (Amambing, 2011) which won the Encouragement Prize in the Noma Concours for Picture Book Illustrations (ACCU) organized by the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO in Tokyo. ACCU competition was the only platform where upcoming illustrators from Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Arab States, the Caribbean and Latin America were given international awards and acclaim.

3.1.1 *The Magic Buffalo*

The picturebook titled ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (hereafter MB), written and illustrated by Jainal Amambing was published in 2011 by Picturebook Arts. This picturebook was chosen because it won an international award and has also been translated into German. The illustrator uses gouache on paper for the visuals. This picturebook has eight openings. The word ‘opening’ refers to the double-page spread and opening 1 begins when the text starts (Sipe & Brightman, 2009).

The story is mainly about Sansarinaga, a poor lonely boy who does not have a buffalo like the other boys in his village. To overcome this, he creates a beautiful toy buffalo from parts of a coconut tree. This toy buffalo has some magical powers as it can float, slide and fly. The children in the village are attracted to this toy buffalo and slowly become friends with Sansarinaga.

3.1.2 Interview with Jainal Amambing

To triangulate the findings of the study, a second set of data was information obtained from a one-on-one interview with Jainal Amambing, the writer-illustrator of ‘The Magic Buffalo’ picturebook. Jainal Amambing, a Rungus native from Sabah, was born in 1968. He has won many art competitions at the state, national and international levels. These two sets of data were to ensure the credibility and validity of the study as well as provide a broader description of the findings.

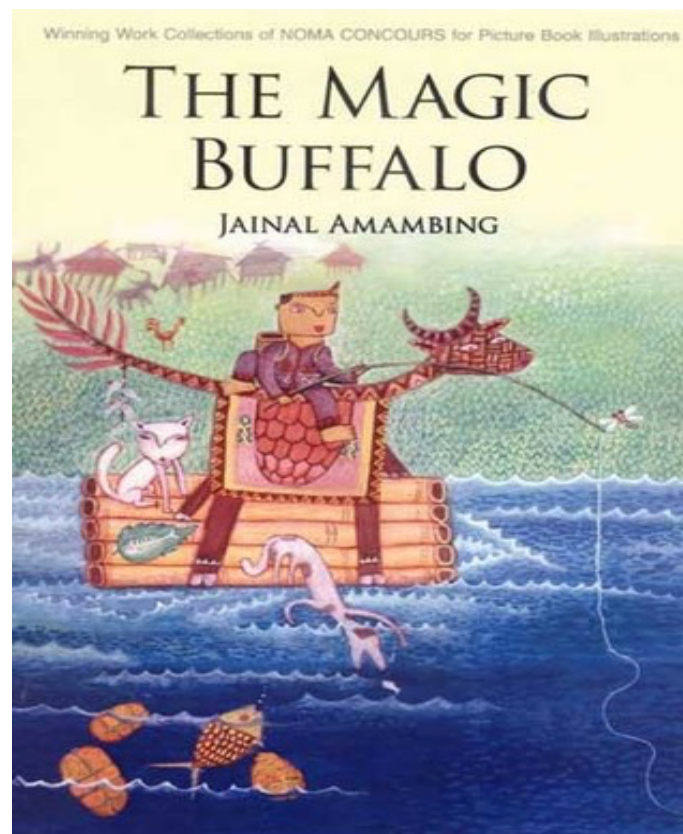


Figure 4. The book cover of ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (Amambing, 2011).

3.2 Data Collection

The first method of data collection involved an analysis of the visual, textual, and cohesion content of the Malaysian picturebook in order to identify how the literary element ‘mood’ is represented in it. The second method of data collection was the information gathered from the one-on-one interview with the writer-illustrator.

3.3 Data Analysis

All visuals in this picturebook were analysed for the two aspects of the literary element ‘mood’, which are ambience and visual affect (Painter et al., 2013). The visuals in this picturebook were first labelled and presented systematically. The code MB is used to represent ‘The Magic Buffalo’. The first visual opening in this picturebook is labelled as MB, followed by the word OP (refers to picturebook opening) and a number that signals the order it appears in the picturebook (i.e.: MB/OP/1). Similarly, all textual data were analysed for the subsection of the literary element ‘mood’ which is emotive language (verbal affect). For textual analysis, the text from this picturebook was typed into a word document and arranged according to the sequence of the opening. Each opening had a different number of sentences and they were labelled numerically according to the order. For example, the second sentence in the third opening of this picturebook is denoted as MB/OP3/L2.

The intermodal cohesion between the visual and textual representation of the literary element ‘mood’ in the two picturebooks was analysed using an adapted version of Painter et al.’s (2013) Multimodal Discourse Analysis framework and judged in terms of convergence or divergence. The visual and textual meaning systems that were used to analyse the literary element ‘mood’ are clearly outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Mood Meaning Systems of visual and textual data (adapted from Painter et al. (2013) and Martin and Rose (2003)).

| Visual | | Textual | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Ambience: Colour choices in relation to vibrancy warmth familiarity | Vibrancy: full saturation or low saturation | Verbal affect Emotional language | happiness: cheer happiness: affection unhappiness: misery unhappiness: antipathy |
| | Warmth: warm shades like red, yellow and orange hues Cool: cool shades like blue, green, aqua hues | | satisfaction: interest satisfaction: admiration dissatisfaction: ennui dissatisfaction: displeasure |
| | Familiarity: more colour differentiation or less colour differentiation | | |
| Visual Affect Emotion depicted in facial features and bodily stance | Facial expressions - Agonised face may show the character is upset | | security: confidence security: trust insecurity: disquiet insecurity: surprise |
| | Bodily stance | | |
| | Gestures | | |

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following four subsections discuss the findings of the three research questions. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 discuss the findings of the first research question which looks at how the visual meaning-making systems represent the literary element ‘Mood’, Section 4.3 discusses the findings of the second research question which is the textual analysis of the literary element ‘Mood’, while Section 4.4 focuses on the third research question which looks at how the visual and textual meaning systems cohere to develop the literary element ‘Mood’.

4.1 Ambience in ‘The Magic Buffalo’

The emotional mood in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ is conveyed visually by colours. The first opening which depicts a lively village scene is illustrated mainly using greenish-yellow hues and brightened with splashes of vibrant red and orange. The choice of colours creates a muted light ambience which produces a subdued effect. The second opening is mainly filled with less saturated colours or muted light shades of orangish-yellow; while the warmer hues are used to depict the rising sun, the skyline and the children riding their buffalos around the village. The enveloping orange ambience creates positive vibes as orange is often considered a life-affirming colour in Asia (de Bortoli & Maroto, 2001). The ambience changes in opening 3 because the surroundings in this visual is created mainly using cool shades of green and blue. These shades help to invoke a cool and calm atmosphere which is matched by the main character’s serene disposition (Madden et al., 2000, p. 97).



Figure 5. Ambience in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (opening 3).

In opening 4 and 5, the illustrator uses magenta and violet colours to depict the night scene, and this is combined with splashes of bright colours from the moon and the houses on the foreground (refer to Figure 6). The reduced palette in openings 4 and 5 and the choice of dark colours transmit the feelings of being removed from reality and indirectly indicate dream scenes (Painter, 2008, p. 101; Painter et al., 2013). In addition, the dream scenes in these two-opening contrast with the familiar more differentiated palette of the waking or day environment in the previous opening.



Figure 6. Ambience in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (opening 4).

The ambience changes once again in opening 6 as the use of muted light yellow and splashes of brown and red shades create an energetic and jovial mood that contrasts with the sleepy dazed look on Sansarinaga’s face. This positive mood is maintained in opening 7, when the setting changes to an outdoor scene. The entire outdoor scene is dominated by shades of light yellow and green with some splashed of warm red and brown. The surrounding cool green ambience contrasts with the warm splashes provided by the village homes and children indirectly creates a happy and exultant mood. In the final opening, the brightness is reduced and the enveloping ambience is mainly depicted using muted green shades that are relaxing (Kurt & Osueke, 2014, p. 11) while the warm splashes used for boy’s attire, homes, trees and moon help to extend the palette and establish a sense of familiarity (Painter, 2008). In general, the choice of colours in this picturebook help to create a calm and comforting mood.

4.2 Visual Affect in ‘The Magic Buffalo’

In the introductory opening, the writer-illustrator portrays Sansarinaga as a lonely boy who is standing astride a toy buffalo made from parts of a coconut tree. He stands alone in a corner watching the other boys in his village riding a real buffalo. The ‘simple smile’ on his face as he looks yearningly at the other boys clearly shows his lack of involvement in the activity (Lewis, 2012). The limited expression is still seen on his face in the next opening although he is now riding a decorated toy buffalo.

In opening 3, Sansarinaga is shown to be sitting astride his toy buffalo and fishing. His face is relaxed, and he looks composed. In opening 4, Sansarinaga is shown riding his toy buffalo in the sky. Although his facial expression remains neutral, his forward-leaning upper body indicates excitement. His posture indicates a tense and exciting mood. Alternatively, the village children have shocked expressions on their faces. In the subsequent opening, Sansarinaga’s facial expressions shifts from calm to shock when he falls off from his toy buffalo. His eyes are wide open, and his rounded mouth is curving downwards as if he is shouting (Nikolajeva, 2013; Tan & Nareyek, 2009). His postural stance also shifts from being confident to awkward in this opening as can be seen in Figure 7. His arms are flailing as he falls from the sky (Lhommet & Marsella, 2015; Tan & Nareyek, 2009). Sansarinaga’s facial expression changes again

in opening 6. His half-closed eyes show that he is in a half-awake state and this is reinforced in his sitting position as he is depicted sitting on the floor with his legs splayed open (Kuhnke, 2012, p. 115). Probably, he fell from his hammock.



Figure 7. Visual Affect in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (opening 5).

In the final two opening, Sansarinaga’s face is lit with happiness and joy. He is with his toy buffalo and surrounded by his friends. Similar looks of contentment are reflected in the faces of the other young children in the two visuals. The final opening also shows Sansarinaga’s friends jumping with joy. In short, the visual affect meaning systems, particularly the facial expressions and bodily stances of Sansarinaga and his friends, clearly reflect the change of mood in this story (Lhommet & Marsella, 2015; Tan & Nareyek, 2009).

4.3 Verbal Affect in ‘The Magic Buffalo’

The literary element ‘mood’ is mainly conveyed textually through a writer’s choice of ‘emotional language’ words or resources of verbal affect. Mood can be conveyed implicitly or explicitly using these emotional language words as depicted in Table 2. The ‘emotional language’ used in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ reflects the type of effect the writer-illustrator of this picturebook wants to create. The first two examples in Table 2 highlight Sansarinaga’s emotional state in the beginning of the story. His unhappy feelings are mainly experienced as emotional dispositions. He is sad and lonely because he does not own a buffalo. As a result, he has no friends. The mood of the story changes in opening 4 as the other children sees him flying in the sky with his toy buffalo. Indirectly, this lifts Sansarinaga’s morale and decreases the other children’s confidence. The final two opening clearly highlight Sansarinaga’s feelings of happiness and security as detailed in Table 2. In short, the story which begins with a sad mode, ends in a happy note and manner as Sansarinaga is no longer lonesome. He is popular and has many friends now thanks to his toy buffalo. The textual analysis also shows that happiness/unhappiness (Martin & Rose, 2003) is the most commonly found emotion in this picturebook. In general, the writer-illustrator choose not to intensify affect textually as the chosen epithet or attribute like ‘astonished’, ‘frightened’ and ‘delighted’ only convey a median degree of intensity (Martin & Rose,

2003). Perhaps, the writer-illustrator wants to prevent a close identification with the protagonist (Painter et al., 2013).

Table 2. Emotional language in ‘The Magic Buffalo’.

| Opening/ Line No | Verbiage | Inscribed | Invoked | Appraised | Source |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------|
| MB OP 1/L1 | had no friends | | -ve happiness | Sansarinaga | Narrator |
| MB/OP 4/L2 | sad | -ve happiness | | Sansarinaga | Narrator |
| MB/OP 4/L3 | laughed at him | +ve happiness | -ve happiness | village children/ Sansarinaga | Narrator |
| MB/OP 4/L6 | astonished | -ve security | | Everyone | Narrator |
| MB/OP 5/L1 | had a wonderful time | | +ve happiness | Sansarinaga and friends | Narrator |
| MB/OP 5/L4 | frightened | -ve security | | Sansarinaga | Narrator |
| MB/OP 7/L2 | delighted to see the toy buffalo | +ve happiness | | children | Narrator |
| MB/OP 8/L1 | made many friends | | +ve happiness | Sansarinaga | Narrator |
| MB/OP 8/L2 | not alone any more | | +ve security | Sansarinaga | Narrator |

4.4 Intermodal Cohesion in ‘The Magic Buffalo’

Picturebooks for young readers often convey mood or emotions via visual and textual semiotic modes (Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Ghosn, 2013). Colours, facial expressions, bodily stance, and gestures are used to convey mood effectively in visuals (Martinez & Harmon, 2012; Nikolajeva, 2013), while emotional language, which is a type of attitude in the Appraisal framework, is used to convey the literary element ‘mood’ textually (Martin & White, 2005). In terms of intermodal cohesion, there is convergence in meaning in the introductory opening as both the visual and verbal affect indicate that the main character (Painter et al., 2013). This concurs with Moya’s (2014) postulation that “picture adds specificity to the verbal text as it provides an instantiation of the text and attaches additional meaning” (p. 71). Sansarinaga is a lonely and unconfident boy. He has no friends because he does not own a buffalo. The main character’s forlorn facial expression and the lack of happiness conveyed by the emotional language textually show that he is miserable. These findings however do not cohere with the ambience choices as Table 3 highlights the fact that the ambience in opening 1 is hopeful and positive. In this opening, muted light bright shades that indicate hope and positivity are predominantly used. This divergence is mainly due to the use of pastel colours by the illustrator to attract young learners (Jainal Amambing, personal communication, May 29, 2017).

Table 3. Intermodal cohesion in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ for Mood.

| Opening | Visual | | | Textual | |
|---------|---|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Ambience | Visual Affect (positive) | | Verbal Affect | |
| | Vibrancy/ Warmth Familiarity | Facial expression | Bodily stance | Gesture | |
| 1 | muted: light/warm and cool colours/ familiar colours | forlorn | upright | | had no friends (-ve happiness) |

Table 3 continued...

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|
| 2 | muted: light/ warm colours/ familiar colours | intense | leaning forward | | |
| 3 | muted: light/ cool colours/ familiar colours | calm and relaxed | upright | | |
| 4 | muted: dark/ mainly warm colours/ unfamiliar colours | proud smile/ happy | confident | | sad (-ve happiness) laughed at him (-ve happiness) |
| 5 | muted: dark/ warm colours/ unfamiliar colours | shock | arms and legs flailing / awkward | | had a wonderful time (+ve happiness) Sansarinaga was frightened (-ve security) |
| 6 | warm colours/ familiar colours | sad and sleepy | slumped position | | |
| 7 | vibrant/ cool and warm colours/ familiar colours | smiling face | | | delighted (+ve happiness) |
| 8 | muted: dark/ mainly cool colours/ dark green/ familiar colours | smiling face/ happy | | | made many friends (+ve happiness) not alone any more (+ve security) |

The atmosphere changes in openings 4 and 5 as the setting is now at night. In terms of ambience, the reduced palette in these two opening signals a literal removal from reality as they are vastly different from the palettes used in the other opening. The range of magenta and violet colours contrasts with the more differentiated palette of the waking environment. The choice of colours, the moonlight and the visual depiction of a sleeping woman in opening 4 (refer to Figure 6) not only informs the viewers that the incident takes place at night but also creates “the mystery typically associated with the world of dreams where one is free to express his emotions and behave wildly” (Moya, 2014, p. 164). This view is also shared by the picturebook writer-illustrator who said that the depiction of the moon indicates a dream world and not reality (Jainal Amambing, personal communication, May 29, 2017).

There is a divergence in meaning in opening 4 as the visual mode shows Sansarinaga looking happy and pleased while flying with his toy buffalo, but the emotional language used in the written text highlights his sad mood. There is a similar divergence in opening 5 as the visual shows the character’s shocked and dazed look while the written text conveys both his shock and happiness. In the final two opening, there is convergence in terms of intermodal cohesion as both the visual and verbal affects show that Sansarinaga is happy and contented. This is also reflected in the cool pastel shades used which evoke a gentle happy mood.

In general, the information presented in Table 3 clearly shows that the visual semiotic mode commits more meaning in conveying ‘mood’ in picturebooks. There is no indication of the literary element ‘mood’ textually in opening 2, 3 and 6. Clearly, visual meaning systems play a bigger role in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ as meaning is relayed through visual affect and colours (ambience). The choice of colours in this picturebook is mainly bright and positive and do not convey the unhappiness felt by

the main character in the beginning of the story. This is however compensated by visual affect choices like facial expressions and bodily stance and also ‘visual symbol’ like the depiction of moon in ‘The Magic Buffalo’, which denotes the world of imagination and magical mood (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Moya, 2014). Textual description of characters’ emotional states can be substituted or corroborated by the use of these visual symbols as well as “drawings of bodily postures and facial expressions that readily communicate feelings to readers” (Keen, 2011, p. 146). In summary, facial expressions, bodily stance, and emotional language play a more dominant role in this picturebook as they have the power to create instant alliances with characters through sympathetic responses to their feelings. Accordingly, young learners cannot rely on cognitive strategies used to comprehend written texts to decipher the meanings of visual images (Serafini, 2011). Instead, they should be equipped with a knowledge of visual meaning systems or engage in ‘slow looking’ to decode the meaning of multimodal ensembles (Kachorsky et al., 2017; Pantaleo, 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

In terms of visual analysis for the literary element ‘mood’, the findings show that facial expression is the most frequently used visual affect in *The Magic Buffalo* to convey mood, followed by bodily stance and gesture. This is probably because it is easier to convey emotions and draw emotional responses from readers via facial expressions. In this picturebook, the eyes and the mouth are the two main features that reveal Sansarinaga’s emotions. The textual analysis of ‘mood’ is identified by analysing the use of verbal affect and the overall atmosphere surrounding the text. ‘The Magic Buffalo’ is written from a third-person perspective and several emotional languages is used to reveal the changes in the main character’s feelings. The emotions relayed in this picturebook mainly fall into the unhappiness/happiness set, which is common in picturebooks for young learners.

The findings for intermodal cohesion reveal that visuals contribute additional meaning to the representation of literary element ‘mood’ in ‘The Magic Buffalo’. A picturebook reader has to read the text and view the visuals simultaneously to get a clearer understanding of the story and to identify the ‘mood’ of the story. In order to do this, the reader-viewer need to understand the relationship between the visual and textual modes as each mode has its codes and conventions. The spatiality and composition of a visual image are determined by spatiality and composition, while the temporal sequence of a written text is determined by temporal sequence. As a result, young learners cannot employ the same cognitive methods that they use to understand textual texts to decode the meanings of visual images. To decipher the meaning of multimodal ensembles, they should be equipped with the knowledge of visual meaning systems. The implication of this study lies in the relationship between visual and textual modes in picturebooks and how they collaborate to develop the literary element ‘mood’. The visuals in picturebooks will help young learners to understand literary concepts better, increase their vocabulary and comprehension as well as to read visuals critically. In addition, they will be able to ascertain the mood transmitted in the stories based on the visuals in the picturebooks, which they may otherwise miss.

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the study only investigated one literary element. Other literary elements like setting, character, and plot were not included in the study. Secondly, the data is limited to only one award-winning Malaysian picturebook. Thirdly, the writer and illustrator of this picturebook is the same person and as such, the results may be different if otherwise. Future studies may look at picturebooks written and illustrated by different persons, or picturebooks from different countries and origins as the way literary element ‘mood’ is represented may be different in Western countries. In addition, forthcoming studies can also investigate how the literary element ‘mood’ is represented in postmodern picturebooks which has metafictional features and postmodern literacy devices like multiple narrators and non-linear sequences.

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