

The pencil and the dragon: semiotics of sequentiality in the children's picture book

El lápiz y el dragón: semiótica de la secuencialidad en el álbum ilustrado infantil

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Abstract

Sequentiality can be briefly explained as a way of conveying meaning that happens when a work is segmented into small units. The theory about sequentiality started with comic artists such as Will Eisner and Scout McCloud at the end of the last century. However, even though the picture book is, in the same way as the comic, eminently sequential, this characteristic has been little studied. This is a theoretical article based on Multimodal Analysis and whose objectives are: a) to argue why sequentiality should be considered one of the fundamental semiotic modes of the narrative picture book, together with the text and the image; b) analyse how the sequentiality strata are formed and c) define concepts to analyse sequentiality, such as the panel, the sequential gap and the page break. Having a theory of sequentiality for the picture book is relevant to analyse in greater depth the aesthetic resources that artists use and to formulate better strategies for the development of reading and visual literacy.

Keywords: Children's literature; picture books; narration; illustration; multimodal discourse analysis; semiotics

Resumen

La secuencialidad se puede explicar brevemente como una forma de transmitir significado que sucede cuando una obra está segmentada en pequeñas unidades. La teoría sobre la secuencialidad nació de la mano de los artistas del cómic como Will Eisner y Scout McCloud a finales del siglo pasado. Sin embargo, a pesar de que el álbum ilustrado es, de la misma forma que el cómic, eminentemente secuencial, esta característica ha sido relativamente poco estudiada. El presente es un artículo teórico que parte desde el Análisis Multimodal y que tiene como objetivos: a) argumentar por qué la secuencialidad debe considerarse uno de los modos semióticos fundamentales del álbum ilustrado narrativo, junto con el texto y la imagen; b) analizar cómo están conformados los estratos de la secuencialidad y c) definir conceptos que permitan analizar la secuencialidad, tales como el panel, la brecha secuencial y el cambio de página. Contar con una teoría de la secuencialidad para el álbum ilustrado es relevante para analizar con mayor profundidad los recursos estéticos que emplean las y los artistas y para formular mejores estrategias para el desarrollo de la lectura y la alfabetización visual.



Palabras clave: Literatura infantil; álbum ilustrado; narrativa; ilustración; análisis multimodal del discurso; semiótica

Introduction

A little monster looks with curiosity and joy at the pencil in front of him. And it seems that he is about to take it when everything changes because the reader turns the page and discovers that this object was not a pencil, but the tail of a gigantic animal. He once again turns the page, and the reader is amazed to discover that this huge body belongs to a dragon. The picture book *Trucas*, by the Mexican Juan Gedovius (2019), is a remarkable example of how the artist has used sequentiality and page turns to create an aesthetic effect. In the first panel¹, the pencil awakens a series of expectations and hypotheses in the reader. But when he turns the page, they are modified. The reader builds his interpretation of the text with successive page breaks, which do not represent progress over time, but rather progress through the body of the giant. Of course, the surprise generated by discovering that the pencil is, in fact, a dragon would be impossible without the proper dosage of information and the narrative tension that occurs thanks to sequentiality.

The picture book is a genre of children's literature that has proven to be not only pedagogical but also artistic (Evans, 2009). It is profound and presents a constant search for new aesthetic resources and, in the same way as the syllogism or the mini fiction, it combines complexity and brevity. Even though the picture book is eminently sequential, this characteristic has been little studied by critics. It is possible that this lack of interest is because the picture book has served as a pedagogical resource and, therefore, scholars have been interested in revealing the way in which images can enhance reading ability. Regardless of the reason, the truth is that the studies around the picture book have focused enormously on the text-image relationship, which is evident in the large number of canonical publications that reflect this interest, from Bader (1976) to Nikolajeva and Scott (2000).

The analysis of sequentiality in the picture book has received attention for approximately a decade, but not in a systematic way, since much of the criticism approaches it tangentially (Fièvre, 2016; Jacobs, 2016; Nikolajeva, 2010; Sipe & Brightman, 2009; van der Linden, 2015). Among the most important contributions are those of Zaparaín and González (2010, pp. 23–24), who define the children's picture book as two pairs of elements that interact with each other: on one hand, the text and the image, and, on the other, sequentiality and the book. For his part, Boulaire (2014) points out that its main elements are the page turn and the ellipse. Finally, Painter et al. (2013) are the ones who make the most extensive approach to this topic. In the chapter devoted to ideational metafunction, they explain how actions are represented across different panels. Undoubtedly, these works are highly relevant, but they hardly ever quote each other and do not use a unified terminology or theoretical framework.

Given the need for concepts that would allow us to understand in greater depth the role of sequentiality in the picture book, this text is written. This is a theoretical article that starts from the Multimodal Analysis and whose objectives are: a) to argue why sequentiality should be

considered one of the fundamental semiotic modes of the narrative picture book², together with the text and the image; b) to analyse how the sequentiality strata are formed and c) to define concepts that allow analysing sequentiality, such as the panel, the sequential gap and the page turn.

Having strong theoretical concepts about sequentiality in the picture book is relevant for several reasons. From a formal perspective, it is convenient to analyse in greater depth the aesthetic resources used by artists. It is also important from a pedagogical point of view to refine empirical studies and to formulate better strategies for the development of reading and visual literacy (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997). Finally, it is necessary to incorporate into the criticism of children's picture book the tool of sequentiality that has been used successfully in comics for so long.

Theoretical framework

Sequentiality can be defined as a way of conveying meaning that happens when a work of art is segmented into small units. The theory about sequentiality was born from the artists of comic such as Will Eisner and Scott McCloud at the end of the last century. One of the first to point it out was Will Eisner in his book *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), where he explains that this feature is important from the very moment the piece is created: "Writing for comics can be defined as the conception of an idea, the arrangement of image elements and the construction of the sequence of the narration and the composing of dialogue" (1985, p. 122). Although Eisner refers to sequentiality in the title of his book, he does not detail this concept. It would take almost a decade for Scott McCloud, in *Understanding Comic* (1993), to delve into it theoretically. This author defined comic as: "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (1994, p. 9). And he underlines the importance of sequentiality as follows: "Taken individually, the pictures below are merely that, pictures. However, when part of a sequence, even a sequence of only two, the art of the image transforms into something more: the art of the comic" (1994, p. 5). The theoretical observations of Eisner and McCloud have been questioned or expanded, but the truth is that their influential analyzes laid the foundations for critics to recognize sequentiality as one of the defining characteristics of this genre (Hayman & Prat, 2005; Morgan, 2003; Postema, 2013; Saraceni, 2003). The children's picture book is eminently sequential, since, like the comic, it is made up of different panels that are read one after the other in a specific order.

According to Multimodal Analysis (MMA), artifacts convey their meanings through a conjunction of various semiotic modes. Moya-Guijarro (2014, p. 60) explains that, although he does not rule out that other modes intervene, the children's picture book is fundamentally bimodal, that is, it is made up of text and image. In this article I will argue that, in addition to the previous ones, sequentiality can be considered as another relevant semiotic mode in the illustrated album.

To explain this, it is first necessary to understand what a semiotic mode is. Although this concept is central in the MMA, its definition is not simple (Moya-Guijarro, 2014, p. 53). According to Bateman and Wildfeuer (2014), a semiotic mode should not be confused with sensory or

material channels. While the former is associated with how we perceive information through the senses, semiotic modes are a social construction that arises around certain ways of using materials. Kress points out that: “Mode is a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning” (2010, p. 79). According to Kress, there are more modes than is usually believed. There is not only the visual mode, but photography, painting, illustration, etc., are semiotic modes for some social groups, such as art experts. For the community of editorial designers, font types or page composition are modes because, over time, this community has done semiotic work to build conventions of meaning (Kress, 2010, p. 88).

For a semiotic mode to be defined as such, it must fulfill Halliday's three metafunctions: ideational, textual, and interpersonal (Halliday, 1978; Kress, 2010, p. 87). In addition, according to Bateman and Wildfeuer, a semiotic mode is constituted by strata (Bateman, 2016; Bateman & Wildfeuer, 2014); the first of them is that of materiality or canvas and consists of the material support used to convey meaning. The second is the middle layer and corresponds to the conventions that have been built around these materials. In the next pages, a semiotic analysis will be performed to determine why, in children's picture book, sequentiality is a mode and what its characteristics are.

Analysis

Is sequentiality a semiotic mode?

To determine whether sequentiality is a semiotic mode, it is necessary that it meets a first requirement: that it satisfies the three metafunctions of Halliday (1978). The first of these is ideational and could be defined as the ability to represent ideas, processes, objects, people, actions, etc., that is, to refer to the world. So, it is worth asking: is sequentiality capable of representing something? And if so, what does it represent? It is true that sequentiality is, so to speak, less “palpable” than images or text. If the latter are removed from a picture book, it remains completely blank, empty. Therefore, it could be thought that the entire transmission of meaning depends exclusively on images and text, but this is false. The panels are not presented in a random way, but have a specific organisation and, if this is altered, the message of the picture book can be modified or destroyed. It can be concluded that, in the children's picture book, the independent panels only represent scenes or states, but are unable to tell a complete story. On the other hand, sequentiality is responsible for establishing a specific relationship between the panels and allows organizing these pieces into a coherent whole. Thus, what sequentiality represents is: a) at the micro level, a certain relationship between one panel and the next, and b) at the macro level, a complete story.

The example where this is most evident is in wordless or almost wordless picture books (Bosch, 2012). Some theorists have pointed out that images have a great capacity to capture space, while they have fewer resources to do the same with the time (Nodelman, 1988; Sipe, 1998). Thus, criticism have traditionally attributed to the words the responsibility of moving the narrative forward. However, wordless picture books are perfectly capable of conveying complex actions, despite the lack of written text.

The second is the textual metafunction and consists of the capacity of a semiotic fabric to create coherence. Sequentiality also fulfills this function in the picture book because the panels are arranged in a specific series, and a slight alteration in their order can completely destroy the meaning. In addition, it is necessary to underline that the panels are not organised in a dimensionless way, but rather within the narrative arc — approach, climax and end —, therefore, sequentiality is closely related to the narrative structure (Cohn, 2013; Nikolajeva, 2010).

Sequentiality also fulfills interpersonal metafunction, that is, it is capable of forming social relationships. The organisation of the panels follows a specific objective as it seeks to generate a particular response in the receiver. In some cases, sequentiality only seeks to convey a story as simply and clearly as possible. On the other hand, there are authors who use sequentiality as a device for de-automation, creating unusual relationships between the panels. In any case, the sequential gap allows to dose the information, change the perspective, generate intrigue, emotion, surprise, empathy, etc.

The function of sequentiality in the picture book is very similar to that of the composition of the page or page layout — a semiotic mode to which Kress (2010) dedicates a detailed analysis —, since it is in charge of organising. Sequentiality does not organise the internal elements of a page, but rather those that are part of a complete narrative and that extend over several pages. Sequentiality is unable to convey meaning if images or text are removed; but, in the same way, if the images and text are taken out of sequence, they lose meaning. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that sequentiality is a semiotic mode, and that it works together with other modes to be able to transmit meaning in the children's picture book.

The strata

The material stratum

Once it has been argued that sequentiality fulfills the three metafunctions, it is necessary to determine which are the strata that compose it. The first one is the material, which consists of the characteristics of the physical support of the picture book. Most of these works are made with thin sheets of paper that are glued or sewn on one of its edges. The pages can be turned, but they are fixed in an unalterable order. In this way, the sequentiality of the picture book is determined by the materiality of the book, that is, by the organization of the sheets in a specific order.

Beyond the fact that the sheets are a common denominator, picture books have completely different material characteristics than other books, which is largely due to the importance of images. It is necessary to remember here that in this genre, the image is not something accessory, but rather collaborates with the text for the transmission of meaning (Moebius, 1986; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000; Nodelman, 1988; Schwarcz, 1982; Sipe, 1998; van der Linden, 2015). Although books for teaching purposes that contain illustrations can be traced back to the Middle Ages, such as Reynard the Fox, the truth is that the picture book has a much more recent origin. According to Townsend: “Although it has scattered precursors, the modern picture-book dates effectively from the last third of the nineteenth century” (Townsend, 2003, pp. 108-109).

Notably, the birth of the picture book is closely related to the development of a new color printing technology perfected by Edmund Evans. This technology provided a suitable material stratum for artists such as Walter Crane, Randolph Caldecott and Kate Greenaway to develop the children's picture book as we know it today (Townsend, 2003, p. 109).

Although printing techniques have changed over time —offset became popular at the beginning of the 20th century— it can be said that, from its emergence to the present day, high-quality color printing is one of the most distinctive material characteristics of the picture book. They are easily distinguished by their large formats, luxurious covers, and beautiful illustrations. This is not something fortuitous, but the advance in printing techniques allowed the image to take on the prominence that is characteristic of this genre.

More recently, all the parts that make up the picture book, such as the front cover, back cover, title page, legal page, and even the size and orientation of the paper, have become elements used by artists to convey meaning (Nikolajeva, 2016, pp. 57–59). Therefore, the main difference in the materiality of the picture book from “normal” literature is that the children's picture book is designed for the transmission of text and images alike, and not just text.

The middle stratum

From a very young age, we learn that the book follows conventions of handling and reading: it has a beginning, an end and must be handled in a certain way; the panels are read, like the flow of the text in the West, from left to right; the pages are turned and, therefore, they are read one by one and in order. Turning the page is perhaps the first thing you learn from books. This set of learnings is called print awareness. It may seem intuitive to an adult, but it is something that develops within the framework of early literacy (Rohde, 2015; Schickedanz & Collins, 2013).

The act of turning the pages is different in the picture book, the comic, and traditional literature, and this has profound implications for sequentiality. In adult literature, turning the page is a mere requirement to keep reading; a work can be printed on different sizes of paper without its meaning being affected. On the other hand, the act of turning the page is a fundamental part of the sequentiality and, therefore, of the experience of reading a picture book.

The picture book and the comic are similar because they both combine text and image, but the sequentiality is different because the picture book has a much greater preference for the use of the double spread (Morgan, 2003; Nikolajeva, 2016; Rouvière, 2008). Nikolajeva points out that: “Single-panel doublespread, with or without text, is by far the most frequent layout, which allows infinite possibilities for details, dynamics, balance —or absence thereof” (2016, p. 62). On the other hand, the comic usually uses six to nine panels on a single page. Of course, this is just a generalisation, and a multitude of counterexamples could be cited, both from comics with double spread panels and from picture books with multiple panels per page. However, one wonders, what is the reason for the preference of the picture book for the double spread? And how does this affect sequentiality? Although a complete answer to this problem would require a study alone, one of the reasons has to do with the social use of this genre.

First, the target audiences are different. While the comic is aimed at young people and adults, the picture book is aimed at children and has notable pedagogical purposes (Gibson, 2010, p. 103). As the picture book is focused on early childhood, the reading is rarely done alone. On the contrary, the reading is frequently supported by an adult who narrates it aloud (Moerk, 1985). This is a fact well known by authors, who are concerned with polishing their texts with the aim of an adequate oral transmission (Palmer, 2014, p. 298). Considering the pedagogical uses of the picture book, it is very possible that the preference for the double spread panel and for large print formats is due to the fact that they favor shared reading, since viewing is easier for two people or even for small groups.

Elements of sequentiality in the picture book

The panel

The panel is the unit of construction of sequentiality³. It can be defined as a representation that brings together the image and the text, and that fulfills a minimal function within the narrative structure. These functions can be extremely varied, such as presenting a character, showing her reflections, portraying the environment, capturing an action, providing clues about the plot or revealing the outcome. The panel has a double articulation: towards the interior, it is a coherent logical and semantic unit; towards the outside, it is part of a larger piece, the book, and therefore interacts with other panels. In the picture book, the panel can be made up of words, images or a conjunction of both. Of course, the relationship between image and text within the panel is complex and encompasses a great diversity of interactions, such as polysemy, symmetry, duet, counterpoint, amplification, synergy, dialogism, irony, etc. (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000; Nodelman, 1988; Schwarcz, 1982; Sipe, 1998). The panel is usually located on the inside pages and, in recent times, it is more and more frequent that it is also found on the end page, the legal page, the title page, the front and the back cover (Consejo-Pano, 2011). In other words, the picture book narrative structure extends beyond the internal pages and has taken possession of those sites that previously seemed reserved for peritexts (Genette, 2001).

The comic is characterised by having panels framed by a black line and white spaces called gutter (McCloud, 1994), while in the picture book the most common is double spread panel without borders (Morgan, 2003; Nikolajeva, 2016; Rouvière, 2008). It is necessary to point out that here we are talking only about generalities, since there are many examples, both in the comic and in the picture book, where the use of the panel breaks these rules. In fact, making a sharp separation is impossible and Rouvière (2008) recognizes five categories of panels that can be considered intermediate between the comic and the picture book. Indeed, although the dominant trend is the double spread panel, there is an enormous multiplicity of sizes, shapes, background colors, frames and panel placements in the picture book. An example of this is *Regalo sorpresa*, by the Argentine author Isol (2018), where it is possible to appreciate full-page panels that show the faces of the characters in detail; several small panels that coexist on the same page and that represent the different scenarios that the main character imagines; and double spread panels at climax moments.

The sequential gap

One of the fundamentals of sequentiality is what I will call here the sequential gap⁴. According to Iser: “The gaps, indeed, are those very points at which the reader can enter into the text, forming his own connections and conceptions and so creating the configurative meaning of what he is reading” (1978, p. 40). In sequential artifacts, such as the comic or picture book, the narration is done with panels, but each panel contains only a fragment of the story. Therefore, the sequential gap can be understood as the relationship of meaning between one panel and another that readers must find. On many occasions, this relationship is a temporal progression, that is, a panel shows an advance in time with respect to the previous one. But the relationships can be infinitely more varied; McCloud (1994) points out that some of the most common sequential gaps consist of showing different moments, actions, themes, scenes, ideas and what he calls *non sequitur*, which happens when there is no obvious logical relationship (pp. 70-72).

The sequential gap is always present, but it can be said that artists sometimes strive to make it practically invisible. It happens when the relation of one panel to next seems logical and natural. This can be called, following the cinematographic terminology, the IRM or institutional representation mode, which Zaparaín and González (2010) explain as follows: “Its basic operation consists of selecting those parts of time or space that are most significant of a reality and present them together so that the observer does not appreciate the cuts that have been made” (p. 145). On the other hand, there are artists who use the sequential gap in a bold way, either because a) it draws attention to the materiality of the book, b) requires a special effort on the part of the reader, or c) forces to reformulate reading conventions. Later I will analyze *Trucas*, by Juan Gedovius, where the sequential gap is used as an important resource to generate aesthetic impact.

In order to understand sequential artifacts, the reader must make inferences about the relationship between different panels and thus be able to create a mental model (Kintsch, 1998). Therefore, inference can be understood, in the context of sequentiality, as the process by which the reader deduces the connections that exist between two or more panels (Cohn, 2019; Gavalier & Beavers, 2020; Yus, 2008).

The page turn

The fact that the double spread panel is the most frequent in the picture book generates important implications for sequentiality (Beauvais, 2015; Jacobs, 2016; Sipe & Brightman, 2009). Bader (1976) called this phenomenon: “the drama of turning the page” (p. 1). Sipe and Brightman (2009) explain that, during the process of creating a book, editors, authors, and illustrators carefully plan page turns. These researchers recover true gems from authors such as Christopher Maselli, Brian Selznick and Eileen Christelow on the importance of turning the page in their creative process; the latter writes: “The surprises should always happen when the page turns!” (cited in Sipe and Brightman, 2009, p. 75).

Why is the page turn so important? The materiality of the pages allows spaces of representation to be generated where text and image interact. In this way, the act of turning the

page implies that the representation space that we were looking at is closed and a new one is inaugurated. When multiple panels are within the same page, the reader can quickly glance between them, but the very nature of the page turn makes it impossible to see the panels that follow. Therefore, it could be said that the page turn delays the reading process and helps to underline intrigue, surprise, and other de-automation effects.

Sequentiality in Trucas

To exemplify the possibilities of sequentiality in the picture book, I will briefly analyze the book *Trucas*, by Juan Gedovius (2019). *Trucas* is one of the most widely read children's picture books in Mexico for its fun illustrations, the endearing hero, the adventure plot and its way of approaching personal independence and the search for creative freedom.

To understand it better, it is necessary to know the history in broad strokes. At the beginning of this book, the main character has fun painting with oil on the walls, but he is punished by a giant hand. To free himself from this authority figure, Trucas approaches to the edge, pulls the paper with his hands, and turns the page. In this new place, he finds a pencil with which he can draw. However, this pencil turns out to be the tail of an enraged dragon that burns it with its flames. And to escape from the dragon, Trucas turns the page again and there he realises that he can draw with the cinder caused by the dragon's fire. In the end, Trucas is proud to show his own drawing with the "charcoal" technique.

Gedovius uses two notable types of sequential gaps. In this article I will call them "extend the panel" and "cross the page". These are rare sequential gaps that are an essential part of the meaning of this picture book. The episode of the dragon, which is the climax of the story, consists of three panels and is carefully planned. As I explained in the introduction, each of the panels plays a different role: the first shows a pencil and generates certain expectations; the second shows that the pencil is the tail of a dragon; and in the third, the dragon is furious because its tail was grabbed. Each panel represents a different part of the animal, and also, they are aligned exactly. The artist has made the drawing of the pencil to coincide with that of the dragon, so that, when the page is turned, the reader has the feeling that this monster is huge because it covers several pages. The use of the extended panel creates something paradoxical: on the one hand, a sensation that the dragon extends over three double spreads, but at the same time that discovery is made little by little and with a dosage of information that is possible thanks to page turns.

The second rare sequential gap, "cross the page", is found in the panel where Trucas reaches up to the edge of the paper and pulls it. In the next panel we see our hero peek through the hole left by the crumpled paper. In this way, the impression is created that Trucas is pulling the same page that the reader is holding and that he is going through that hole. This sequential gap is in line with other elements in the text that allude to the creative process and illustration, such as oil, pencil and charcoal. In addition, the desire to create is the main engine of the story. The fact that the character walks twice to the edge of the page and pulls it, can be interpreted as if he were switching to a different story. Thus, in his search for creative freedom, he shifts from one story to another until he finds it. Although subtle, *Trucas* is a metafictional text, a picture book whose theme is illustration and the search for independence in order to create. Gedovius

is an artist who takes sequentiality to the limit. He uses sequential gaps in such a way that they not only break reading conventions but are fundamental to the construction of one of the most complex meanings of the book, metatextuality.

Conclusions

Along with the image and the text, sequentiality is one of the semiotic modes that make up the picture book. This characteristic is not trivial, but its capacity to convey meaning is enormous. In *Trucas* sequentiality not only helps to build the climax, but also contributes to the transmission of one of the central and most avant-garde themes of this work, metatextuality. In *O fim da fila*, by Marcelo Pimentel (2011), the sequential gaps create a circular narrative that is related to the mythological figure of Curupira (Cimirro, 2014). Another example is the famous text *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick (2007), where sequentiality: “function like short silent or early films” (Bullen et al., 2018, p. 81). This author uses sequentiality in such a way that it emulates the cinematographic style of the silent era and thereby supports the main theme of the book. Sequentiality is a highly expressive and malleable semiotic mode that is used by artists according to their aesthetic proposal or their communication needs.

The study of sequentiality can open routes for the analysis of the picture book that until now have been little studied. For example, there is no doubt that the analysis of how readers construct meaning when turning the page is something that deserves much more attention than it has received so far (Jacobs, 2016; Sipe & Brightman, 2009). It would also be very interesting to carry out studies on how the panels are organised in a complex way to create the narrative structures of approach, climax and end.

Finally, it should be noted that the characteristics of sequentiality that I have outlined here should not be considered static. On the contrary, sequentiality is a semiotic mode that is constantly reformulated and changed. The formal innovations carried out by the authors, in addition to new printing techniques, digital illustration or on-screen display, will undoubtedly modify this genre. It is possible that, due to these changes, hybrid texts that incorporate in their sequentiality characteristics of the comic, the graphic novel and even the cinema are proliferating (Beeck, 2012; Evans, 2012; Nodelman, 2012; Palmer, 2014; Postema, 2014; Rouvière, 2008; Zbaracki & Geringer, 2014).

Sequentiality is, on the one hand, a well-studied concept in comics that has a very solid theoretical support. On the other, only until very recently has it begun to be explored in the picture book. In this way, sequentiality is a theoretical tool that brings together the new and the consolidated, and that can inaugurate fertile perspectives of analysis: from other ways of understanding the creative process of the work, to the design of didactic strategies and reading.

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Notes

- 1 In this study, the panel is considered one of the basic units of sequentiality. For its detailed definition, I refer to section 3.3.1 of this article.
- 2 It is important to emphasize that sequentiality is also present, although with its own dynamics, in the lyrical picture book (Munita, 2013; Neira-Piñeiro, 2012, 2018).
- 3 Other critics have already theorized about the minimal unit of the picture book. Without pretending to be exhaustive, I think it is necessary to go back to what they have written about it. Zaparaín and González (2010) write that the minimum unit is the page (p. 53), but I do not agree with them because there may be several illustrations on a page or a large illustration that covers a double page, so there are other significant units greater or smaller than the page. For their part, Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013) define the minimum unit as the image (p. 11). The problem with this is that, by the nature of the label they choose, they seem to leave the text out. Due to the above, I have decided to use a more appropriate unit, the panel, which is used prolifically by comic critics and which Nikolajeva has already successfully used in the picture book (2016).
- 4 McCloud uses the term *closure*, which has its origin in Gestalt theory and refers to the tendency of the human mind to perceive different forms -a series of points, for example- as if they were connected and were part of a whole (Koffka, 2001). I do not use the term closure because, as other critics have pointed

out, it departs from what it means in Gestalt and can be confused with other concepts, such as *conclusion*. Boulaire (2014) calls ellipsis what I call the sequential gap.