

# Review of Narrative Researches on Children's Picture Books at Home and Abroad

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## Abstract

**This article first provides a literature review of narrative researches on picture books at home and abroad, sorting out the academic history of the researches on picture books. Then, based on this study, it explores the future trends of research on children's picture books. Finally, it proposes an analysis of the content of original children's picture books in China to explore whether creators of domestic picture books make good use of them to narrate traditional Chinese culture, allowing children and teenagers to have a better understanding and appreciation of their nation and traditional culture, thereby develop a sense of belonging and identification, establish patriotic thinking, and enhance their confidence in Chinese culture.**

## Keywords

**Children's Picture Books; Narrative; Traditional Chinese Culture.**

## 1. Introduction

Picture books generally refer to books that focus on drawing and are accompanied by a small amount of text or even no text. Children's picture books are important reading materials for the enlightenment education of children and adolescents, and also tell stories or convey information to readers (Nodelman & Reimer, 2002). The earliest picture book was The Tale of Peter Rabbit series created by British female writers in 1903, which is considered the beginning of modern picture books.

## 2. The Academic History and Trends of Foreign Researches on Narrative of Picture Books

### 2.1. The Impact of Parent-Child Picture Books Reading on Children's Growth

Some Japanese researchers of children's picture books focus on the impact of parent-child picture books reading on children's growth, and at the same time pay attention to people's understanding and appreciation of the narrative language structure of picture books, so as to establish a correct understanding of the essential role of picture books (Tadashi Matsui, 1997, 2007, 2011, 2013; Hayao Kawai et al., 2011; Tanimoto Seigo & Haijima Kari, 2011). When using children's picture books for collaborative information learning activities (also known as parent-child reading), if parents use communication strategies that can activate and construct children's thinking, the reading outcome will be more effective (Blewitt, Rump, Shealy & Cook, 2009, Wasik, Hindman & Snell, 2016, Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti & Kaderavek, 2013). Before children acquire reading skills, they usually enjoy reading picture books to form an understanding of the drawings that tell the story. In addition to being more effective at reading, talking to parents about stories in picture books can also help children acquire speaking skills because children's books contain vocabulary and storytelling that children rarely encounter in other contexts (Massaro, 2015, Montag, Jones & Smith, 2015).

## 2.2. The Relationship between Picture and Text in Picture Books and Their Narrative

The second is the study on the graphic relationship and narrative of picture books. Scholars not only pay attention to the role of picture books in the early reading education of children, but also study the characteristics of pictures and texts in picture books. They believe that picture books are real art, and it is necessary to use semiotic theory to understand and think about the layout, correlation and effect between pictures and texts in picture books, which have an important impact on narrative (Nodelman,1988; Doonan, 1993; Nikolajeva & Scott,2001), pictures and texts can tell stories in unison, they can also take turns, and they are mutually stimulating, flexible and complex (Lewis,2001). There are also scholars exploring the art of visual storytelling through case studies of excellent children's works (Salisbury & Styles, 2012). Picture books belong to multimodal discourse (Hassett & Curwood, 2009; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009), picture books use their multi-modal symbolic narration and the multi-modal metaphors in picture books, which have an influence and guiding effect on children's language and cognitive development (Purcell, 2018), as well as educational significance (O' Halloran, 2016).

According to the review of foreign research, narrative studies on picture books in foreign countries mainly use picture books to cultivate the reading level of children and teenagers, improve the oral expression ability of readers, pay attention to the characteristics of narrative language of picture books, and study how it can better meet the cognitive level of readers. It focuses on the study of the features of pictures and words in picture books and the synergistic effect between pictures and words used to tell stories. There are also a small number of studies from the aesthetic perspective appreciating the readers' visual experience of picture books, that is, the visual narrative art of picture books. However, at present, few foreign studies on children's picture books have studied the narrative characteristics of picture books from the perspective of traditional culture.

## 3. The Academic History and Trends of Domestic Related Researches

The term "picture book" is from Japanese words, and it was also known as "huiben" in Chinese. In the 1930s, picture books became popular in the United States, and in the 1950s, they became popular in Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea (Wang Jing and Lu Qing, 2017). At present, the development of picture books in countries such as Europe, America, and Japan is relatively complete. Domestic creations of children's picture books were relatively late. After years of development, China joined the International Children's Reading Union in 1990 and began to introduce a large number of excellent western children's picture books. After 2002, picture books gradually became popular in China. After more than a decade of development, children's picture books have formed a certain market. Both in terms of variety and content attraction, Chinese original children's picture books have made great progress (Wu Xiaoyue, 2014). Chinese original children's picture books refer to picture books created by local Chinese writers and illustrators, compared to picture books imported from abroad.

Relatively speaking, the narrative research on picture books started relatively late in China. In the mid to late 20th century, picture books gradually became accepted and familiar to domestic readers, and there was relatively little research on picture book narrative, which was not comprehensive enough. The researches on children's picture book narrative in China can be summarized into four aspects:

One is to explore and analyze the narrative function, narrative strategy, and artistic expression of graphic and textual narratives in picture books, and researchers believe that graphic and textual narratives can coordinate and narrate together (Xie Qunfang, 2003; Fang Weiping, 2009; Zhu Ziqiang, 2011; Peng Yi, 2012).

The second is about the study of relationship between graphics and text in picture books, that is, the interaction between graphics and text in picture books can enhance their expressive power (Chen Wenliang, 2012; Zhou Li, 2014; Xie Nini, 2014).

The third is to study the reader's reading experience, cognitive aesthetic perception, and artistic aesthetic experience of picture book narratives (Zhao Xiufeng and Li Xiaowei, 2014; National Defense, 2017). The multimodal metaphorical narrative of picture books is beneficial for guiding children to pay attention to, recognize, and understand the content of picture books (Zhao Xiufeng et al., 2014, 2016; Teng Da and Miao Xingwei, 2018; Cheng Lulu et al., 2020).

The fourth is to emphasize the integration of traditional culture into domestic creations of children's picture book, in order to tell Chinese stories well, inherit and spread Chinese traditional culture, and build national cultural identity (Liu Xiaoye and Wang Zhuang, 2016; Yuan Weiwei, 2016; You Zhenwu and Luo Zhenglin, 2018; Chen Xuhong, 2019).

The review of domestic research shows that there are only a few researchers in China who analyze how original children's picture books narrate traditional culture from the perspective of interactive graphics and text. At present, research on children's picture books in China has shown characteristics of convergence and popularization with foreign researches, and there is relatively little research on children's picture books with domestic characteristics.

#### 4. Prospects for Future Researches on Picture Book Narratives

Looking at the current research status at home and abroad, the existing literature has formed a good research foundation, but there are few studies on how to integrate China's excellent traditional culture into the creation of domestic original children's picture books, and there are few studies on how Chinese original children's picture books use pictures and texts to narrate excellent traditional culture, so as to tell Chinese stories and inherit China's excellent traditional culture. In the future, researches on picture books can analyze how Chinese original children's picture books use pictures and texts to describe the excellent traditional Chinese culture from the aspects of classical literary masterpieces, myths and legends, fables, folk tales, traditional festivals, folk culture, opera culture, classical costumes, to traditional Chinese colors, and systematically explore the researches in the context of the country's requirements for inheriting the excellent traditional Chinese culture in the new era, so as to highlight the era, pertinence and operability.

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