

Comparative Analysis between Chinese and Western Picture Books for Children in Safety Education

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Abstract

From the perspective of early childhood safety education, this study takes the top 30 picture books for children in safety education from Dangdang and Amazon as the research object, and conducts a comparative analysis between Chinese and Western picture books from target age group, theme coverage, character type and content presentation. The results show that both Chinese and western picture books fail to provide a clear and reasonable target age group. They have a similar proportion in theme coverage, but the Chinese picture books show a high repetition in topic choice. They also share a similar preference of human and animals as character type while western picture books show a richer ethnic diversity. Case analysis of the six selected picture books shows a dominant use of fresh and bright colors for both despite some improper uses of colors in Chinese picture books; and a poor coordination between pictures and texts, such as small fonts and large proportion of texts for both and a rigid use of words in Chinese picture books. Content analysis reveals the challenges and differences in creating interestingness and avoiding preaching. Suggestions are also discussed.

Keywords

Safety Education Picture Books for Children, Comparative Analysis, Early Childhood Education

1. Introduction

In western countries, the safety education is highly emphasized. Families, schools and society all attach great importance to safety education for children (O'Neill, Fleeer, & Agbenyega et al., 2013). Children's picture books on safety education are also growing well. Although the picture books in China started

relatively late, the current development is also very strong, including picture books on safety education, thanks to the increasing attention to early childhood education and the ever-increasing awareness of the value of picture books for children education.

In addition to studies on the educational value of children's picture books and teaching application, studies on picture book itself have also been conducted in western world. [Matulka \(2008\)](#), for example, devotes a whole chapter of his book to the anatomy of a picture book: book jackets, shape and size, paratexts, illustrations and typography. Among the elements of picture books, the relationship between images and words has drawn special attention. [Nodelman \(1988\)](#) argues that image is not an accessory of words, but complementary to words, and is another language to jointly explain the content. It is tested with eye movement experiments that early childhood pay most attention to pictures and relatively little attention to words although their preference for pictures will gradually decrease as they grow older ([Justice & Lankford, 2002](#)). Preschoolers also have their criteria for the beauty of illustrations, such as familiar objects or surroundings, action, color, clothing or accessories, body features, according to a finding drawn from interviews with preschooler ([House & Rule, 2005](#)). Therefore, a truly successful picture book demands a symbiotic relationship between words and images ([Horning, 2010](#)). It is generally agreed that content, form and expression are the three pillar parts of a picture book ([Emire & Bayraktar, 2014](#)).

Studies on picture book itself have also been conducted in China. From the perspective of art design, Hao proposed the skeleton and outline of creating and compiling a picture book, that is, concept, elements, skills of form and techniques of content for picture books ([Hao, 2009](#)). There are also studies on how to design safety education picture books from the aspects of composition, color, role and image based on market survey and literature review ([Zhang, 2016](#)). There are relatively few researches on picture book itself from the perspective of early childhood education. Among the few, Hu's study focused on the characteristics of children's reading psychology and found that the creation of picture books in China usually neglected children's nature, and the match between pictures and words was rigid ([Hu, 2013](#)). The similar problem was also found in a study eight years later, based on the survey of kindergarten teachers and children's parents, with a finding of pale emotion, serious preaching, rigid coordination between images and words ([Liu, 2021](#)).

Comparative studies on Chinese and western children's picture books are also available in China, most of which use content analysis to compare Chinese and American picture books. It is found that most American picture books for children, compared with Chinese ones, based mainly on pictures and the texts were only complementary. Besides, the layout is more flexible and the color match is more skillful ([Zhang, 2011](#)). Similarly, a study used text analysis to compare Chinese and American award-winning picture books (Caldeckert and Feng Zikai Children's Picture Book Award respectively), and found that Chinese and American picture books have both similarities and differences in theme,

words and pictures coordination. It argued that Chinese picture books fit the adult world while American picture books reflect children's life, and that Chinese picture books pay more attention to the role of words while American picture books pay more attention to the value of pictures (Yue & Liu, 2020). An analysis from the childness shows that the Chinese picture books focus more on the reproduction of real life while American picture books pay more attention to imagination on the basis of reality and thus for better interestingness. The study concludes that the biggest problem of Chinese picture books is the neglect of the child characteristics (Zhang, 2019).

In general, there are few studies on picture books evaluation from the perspective of early childhood education, and there are even fewer comparative studies on picture books of specific category, such as safety education picture books. However, the safety education is vital for every child and the value of picture books in safety education for children is widely agreed (Freeman, 2014). This paper, therefore, focuses on safety education picture books for children and conducts a comparative study between Chinese and western picture books from the perspective of early childhood education, particularly in terms with target age group, theme coverage, character type and content presentation. The study aims to shed light on how to better understand and produce high-quality picture books for children in safety education by revealing the similarities and differences, strengths and weakness.

2. Research Design

2.1. Research Objects

It was originally planned to select safety education picture books for children from the Feng Zikai Children's Picture Book Award in China and the Caldecott Award in the United States as the research objects. However, a survey found that there are almost no picture books on safety education from the two awards. Furthermore, in order to make the comparison beyond the Chinese and American picture books, this study finally selected the most popular book-selling websites Dangdang in China and Amazon in western world as search platforms. Using "safety education picture book for children" as the keyword, "sales" and "average customer review" as the secondary criteria to filter, the study selected the top 30 picture books of each website as the research object. Among them, four of the top 30 picture books from Dangdang.com are from foreign authors, so the final valid sample for Chinese picture books is 26. Amazon's top 30 picture books mainly come from the United States, Germany, and Australia.

2.2. Research Methods

The study uses a comparative analysis for the best-selling safety education picture books for children in Chinese mainland and western countries. The comparison will be dominated by qualitative analysis, supplemented by quantitative analysis. When it comes to comparative analysis of the content presentation, a smaller amount of representative picture books will be further selected as case

studies for more detailed analysis. Text analysis will also be used to penetrate into the interestingness and preaching of the picture books further selected.

2.3. Analysis Framework

From the perspective of early childhood education, this study analyzes from the dimensions of target age group, theme coverage, character type, and content presentation. The analytical framework partly refers to the features of an excellent picture book proposed by Yue and Liu Qi based on children's interviews (Yue & Liu, 2020).

For theme coverage, this study divides children's safety education into four categories: daily life safety education, such as game safety, drowning prevention education, traffic safety education, etc.; disaster response education, such as earthquake escape, fire safety education, etc.; sex safety education and social security education, such as anti-bullying, anti-injury, anti-abduction, etc. (Liu, 2021). The theme of a picture book is identified according to the title and a quick reading of the book. Besides, the topics are further analyzed to investigate the richness of topic choices.

Character type mainly refers to the use of human, animals, abstract symbols and artifacts as character in picture books. Since the cover is the most important source to reflect the book and to predict the book (Nodelman, 1996), the character type analysis is mainly based on the cover of each picture book. For the human character, this study further analyzes the skin color in order to explore the ethnic diversity.

The content presentation, also the focus of this study, requires more detailed analysis. Therefore, representative picture books are further selected for case studies. The way of selection will be discussed in the section 3.3. The content presentation covers five aspects: color, text and picture coordination, interestingness, preaching and accessory part. Color is the basic element of picture books and an important part of the content, showing the emotion of the picture and enriching the content of picture (Arnheim, 1960). Color analysis mainly investigates whether the color is bright, vivid and varied. The picture and texts coordination will be analyzed through examples in terms with the placement and coordination of the two, including the proportion and simplicity of texts, sentence pattern, and the typesetting, such as font size and flexible typesetting mode. The interestingness and preaching will be analyzed through text analysis. Accessory part includes author's note, note to parents/teachers, game or exercise at beginning or end. In this section, the presence and absence of accessory part and its role will be analyzed.

3. Research Findings

3.1. Target Age Group

A close examination of the target age group offered by the picture books shows that the target readers' age span of both Chinese and western picture books was large. There are two main target age groups for western picture books, one is 2/3

- 4/5 years old and the other is 4/5 - 7/8 years old. Besides, there are also even broader age groups, like 1 - 5 years old (e.g., the picture book *Where Hands Go*), 2 - 7 years old (e.g., *My Body Sends a Signal*), and 5 - 10 years old (e.g., *Police in our School*). Chinese picture books are mainly marked with 3 - 6 as the appropriate reading age, which may be influenced by the conventional Chinese classification of picture books below the first grade of primary school as early childhood books. Of course, there are also some picture books with “2 - 8”, “0 - 6” and “1 - 5” years old as the appropriate age group. Even worse, both Chinese and western pictures books have the case of providing no target age group such as “*Sex Positive Talks to Have with Kids*” or very vague age group, like two age groups (“0 - 3”, “3 - 6”) for the same Chinese picture book *This Will Burn You*, which may cause confusion for parents to choose.

Age group 1 to 5 spans from nursery to preschool and age group 4 to 7 or 8 spans from preschool and elementary school. There are great differences in the physical and mental development at these stages. For example, 0 - 2 years old children are limited in language literacy and cognition but they are interested in delicate and novel things and enjoy imitation. At the age of 3 to 4, children began to be interested in color and the meaning of sentence and began to constantly ask “why” (Sun, 2004). Therefore, such a rough target age group division is unreasonable. Actually, the Chinese official curriculum “*Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3 - 6*” specifies the requirements for very specific age groups like 3 - 4, 4 - 5 and 5 - 6.

3.2. Theme and Topic Coverage

The theme analysis shows that the picture books under investigation mainly cover three categories—daily life education, sex safety education and social security education, while disaster education picture books are obviously scarce (Table 1). The findings suggest that westerners are most concerned about sex safety education as such picture books take up 57% of the whole. The social security picture books are the most popular type (38%) in China, followed by sex safety education (35%), which is out of expectation, compared with Zhang’s study showing that parents paid the least attention to sexual safety education (Zhang, 2016). There are relatively few disaster education picture books, accounting for 10% and 4% respectively. Even for the four disaster education picture books in the western, they are all about fire safety, and other topics like earthquakes, storms and so on are not covered. The study seems to suggest that people don’t pay enough attention to disaster education.

Table 1. Theme distribution for Chinese and western safety education picture books.

Source	Daily life		Sex		Social		Disaster	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
China	6	23%	9	35%	10	38%	1	4%
Western	5	16.5%	17	57%	5	16.5%	3	10%

Further topic analysis shows that western safety education picture books have a better coverage in topics while Chinese ones have a high repetition. For example, six out of ten Chinese picture books in social security are about the prevention of stranger abduction, and half of the daily life security picture books (3 books) are about road safety. The topic of western picture books covers richer scenes of children's life. Taking the social security picture books for example, the five picture books cover topics like "learning to get along", "school rules", "strangers" and "bullying". The same is true of the five picture books in daily life safety, covering topics of "car safety", "online safety", "getting lost" and "Covid-19". Furthermore, the topic in one picture book also covers a wide range of different scenes of the topic, for example, *Better Buckle Up* shows children the importance of using a seat-belt to keep safe not only in the scene of taking a car, travelling by air, but also riding facilities in amusement park, etc. Another interesting finding is that the western picture books keep pace with the times. For example, the book *Superheroes Wear Masks* tells a story about how a child transfers his opinion that it is okay to wear a mask. The book *Miss-information* is about how to keep safe when child goes online for the first time.

3.3. Character Type

Character type for picture books can be divided into four categories: human, animal, abstract sign and artifact. According to Ma's (2022) finding based on interviewing and voting from children, children like animal characters most, abstract characters the second, and the other two types equally the third. But the analysis shows that the Chinese and western safety education picture books take human as the dominant character type, both accounting for more than 65%; animals the second, accounting for 31% and 20%, respectively. By contrast, the character types in western picture books are richer than those in Chinese picture books, 4 picture books using abstract signs as characters. For instance, *Run Away Signs* compares the traffic signs to kids and tells children about the importance of traffic signs and their respective responsibilities. The dominant preference of human and animals as the character in both Chinese and western safety education picture books can be explained by the theme attributes. For example, it is hard to use other character types rather than human in sex education picture books (Table 2).

Further analysis shows that the western picture books represent a richer ethnic diversity. Among 20 picture books with human character, 16 picture books display human characters of different skin colors and races, one example of which is illustrated in Figure 1. In contrast, the human characters in Chinese picture books are mainly with yellow skin, which can be seen from Figure 2.

3.4. Content Presentation

This section will further select representative picture books as case analysis. Among the high-ranking western picture books, there is a German picture book series with four books, covering themes of sex safety, social security and daily life

safety; and topics like improper touch, school bullying, abduction and getting lost. Then, the Chinese picture books with the same topics are selected according to ranking. However, as there is no corresponding part in Chinese picture books in the “getting lost” topic, three picture books for each side are finally selected for comparative analysis. The overall information through comparative analysis is shown in **Table 3**.

Table 2. Distribution of character types.

Source	Role types			
	Human	Animal	Abstract	Artifact
China	18	8	0	0
Western	20	6	4	0

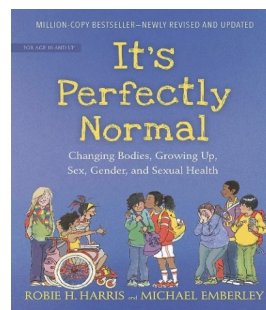


Figure 1. The cover of a western picture book.

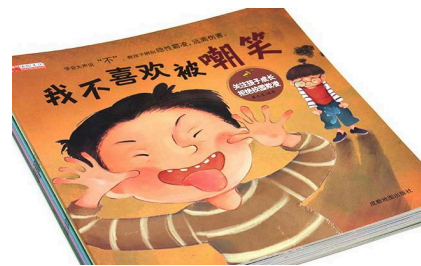


Figure 2. The cover of a Chinese picture book.

Table 3. Overall information of content presentation.

Title of the book (target age group)	Source	Color	Picture and Text Coordination	Interestingness	Preaching	Accessory part
<i>Some Secrets Should Never be Kept</i> (4 - 8)	German	less bright but Clean	small font, too much text	low	low	yes
<i>Say No Loudly</i> (2 - 6)	China	less bright but Clean	stiff coordination	low	strong	yes
<i>I can Build Confidence</i> (3 - 6)	German	bright	too much text	medium	medium	yes
<i>I don't Like Being Laughed at</i> (3 - 6)	China	bright	small font, too much text	medium	medium	no
<i>I won't Go with Strangers</i> (3 - 6)	German	bright	good coordination	strong	low	yes
<i>I will not Go with You</i> (0 - 6)	China	opaque	stiff coordination, too much text	low	strong	no

3.4.1. Color

Colors are necessary to complete the story of a picture book and can be observed through their tone and intensity, intense or pale, transparent or opaque (Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson, & Short, 2011). The analysis shows that both western and Chinese picture books mainly utilize clean, comfortable and bright colors, which is in line with the principles of children's visual development. Analysis also finds improper use of color in the Chinese picture book like *I will not Go with You*, which displays an overall tone of darkness despite some saturated colors in use. The reason for the choice of dark tone may be particularly for the effect of showing the sadness and the harm of abduction, for a better children's empathy. The color in picture books surely needs to be coordinated with the theme and the plot. However, in the plot transition from sadness to happiness at the end of the picture book, fresh and bright colors are still not used to display the change, resulting in an overall tone of depression. In contrast, the western picture book *Some Secrets Should Never be Kept* successfully echoes the tone with the plot. To display Alfred's nervous and afraid emotion, the book uses the dark brown gray tone, but when Alfred gradually plucks up the courage to say the secret, the tone gradually becomes warm and bright.

3.4.2. Pictures and Texts Coordination

Picture books tell a story through the interaction of pictures and texts. A picture book contains at least three kinds of stories: stories told by words, stories implied by pictures and stories generated by the combination of the two (Nodelman, 1988). Only when pictures and words complement each other can an excellent picture book be created. This section will mainly analyze the placement and coordination of pictures and texts.

For placement of pictures and texts, both Chinese and western picture books show a tendency of excessive proportion of text, together with the problem of small size of font. The example in **Figure 3** (left) is from the western picture book *I can Build Confidence*, illustrating an obvious over proportion of texts, which dominate the page. The Chinese picture book *I will not Go with You* (in **Figure 3**) also has the same problem. Although the font size is appropriate, the text occupies one-third to one-half of the page, and even with Chinese pinyin, which is probably a result of China's tendency of taking early childhood education as primary school education (Kim, 2011). The pictures seem to be dispensable in such placement. However, this practice definitely violates the unique characteristics of picture books.

The comparative analysis shows a more flexible placement of pictures in western picture books. Taking *I won't Go with Strangers* in **Figure 4** as an example, it flexibly uses various placement methods, such as several irregular small pictures in one page, to display the rich and rapid mental activities of the characters, which makes the overall images more vivid. In the three Chinese picture books under investigation, the placement of pictures is relatively rigid, mostly with one picture per page.

For the coordination between pictures and words, Chinese picture books show a problem, that is, the story by the words does not complement the story of the pictures. In *Say No Loudly* (Figure 5), for the story of three inappropriate touching displayed by the pictures, the accompanied words go quite rigid, as “when you meet someone exposed private parts, say no”; “when you face the temptation of candy, say no”; “when there is uncomfortable touch, say no”. These words lack the basic description of characters, scenes and plot and fail to supplement the story from the picture. This over-simplified use of prohibitive expressions fails to play the value of the words and does not materialize the effect of one plus one outweighing two (Matsui, 1997).

3.4.3. Interestingness

According to Piaget, children aged 3 - 6 have rich imagination, so the plot and content of picture books should be interesting and imaginative. This section will analyze from two perspectives: plot interestingness and word interestingness.



Figure 3. Examples of text placement from western (left) and Chinese (right) picture books.

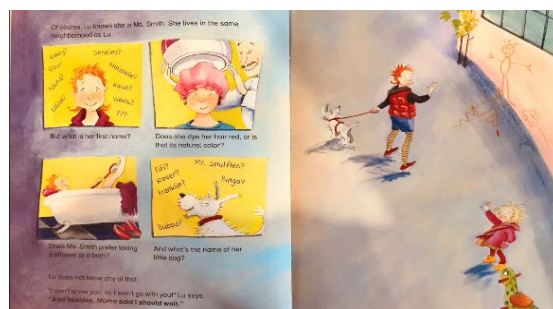


Figure 4. Example of picture placement from a western picture book.



Figure 5. Example of text and picture coordination from a Chinese picture book.

The picture book *I won't Go with Strangers* takes Lulu's waiting for her family to pick her up from school as the setting for plot development. She meets four different types of "strangers", an aunt who is not familiar with in the community, an uncle who repaired her car shed, an uncle who has only met once or twice, and a neighboring aunt who is very familiar with her. The picture book skillfully depicts Lulu's interesting psychological activities, such as a series of questions in her mind for the first aunt "Does she dye her hair red, or is that its natural color? ...And what's the name of her little dog?" Facing the second "stranger", her mind wonders again "Does he have any pets? Maybe a snake, or a raccoon? ...Does he prefer red or green jello?" The rich mental activities are in line with the children's psychology of strong curiosity and full imagination. With such a full foreshadowing by the psychological plots, Lulu made her response: "No idea, Lu thinks. 'I don't know you, so I won't go with you,' she says kindly. This kind of plot arrangement not only enhances the interestingness and avoids the feel of preaching, but also skillfully realizes the function of 'education'. At the same time, concise words are also widely used, such as 'hair, color, dog, snake, pets, jello' etc., which is in line with children's concern and fits children's interests".

The Chinese picture book *I will not Go with You* is quite different. In terms of plot, although the whole story also sets three different characters as "strangers" to take Duoduo home, Duoduo displays no psychological activity. For each time of encountering "strangers", the plot ends with Duoduo's direct refusal by wording "I don't know you, I will wait for my mother", which lacks imagination and fun. In terms of text, the book provides very rich scene description like "The rain falls on the grass, tick tick tick. Duoduo's mother has not come, and blue wellies will accompany her". Similar scene descriptions are repeated three times, but there is no description of any psychological activities. Although the text has a feel of literary color, it seems less attractive for the target readers (0 - 6).

The reason for the lack of interestingness may be attributed to the nature of safety education. For example, neither the plot nor the text of the two sex safety picture books *Some Secrets Should Never be Kept* and *Say No Loudly* seems to be high interesting. For this challenge, some studies proposed a few alleviating methods, such as through the humor of graphics, using exaggerated graphics like a circle for the human head and a triangle for the body, as well as anthropomorphic images, to make picture books a better integration of knowledge and interestingness (Zhu & Zhang, 2019).

3.4.4. Preaching

The preaching is closely related to interestingness and the picture books with a high degree of preaching tend to be less interesting. However, due to the particularity of safety education picture books, it is easy to present a preaching style. The study shows that Chinese picture books seem to have a strong tendency of preaching. For example, in the book *Say No Loudly*, Feifei is too embarrassed to tell her mother that she has been touched of private parts. With no creating of a

dramatic plot or describing Feifei's nervous state of mind, the book goes straight to the point of explaining which parts should not be touched and which secrets should not be kept. Accordingly, many imperative sentences are used to show the 'rules', like "When you meet someone exposing private parts, say no"; "When you face the temptation of candy, say no"; "When there is uncomfortable touch, say no". Such repeated use of prohibitive expressions, coupled with the aforementioned pale, boring plot, will inevitably lead to a strong sense of preaching.

How to reduce preaching and increase interestingness is an important issue. Analysis also shows some methods helpful to reduce preaching. In *Some Secrets Should Never be Kept*, although the texts have only a low level of interestingness, the story doesn't have a sense of preaching due to the skillful use of emotional penetration method. The book designer first uses pictures of gray color and detailed description of his mental activity, like "He was hiding in a dark room, crying and crying", "If he told his mother this terrible secret, she would lose her job and they would have no money to buy food." (see **Figure 6**), creating a sense of tension and fear in Alfred. Instead of using preaching words like "You shouldn't do this" or "You shouldn't keep the secret", his mother encourages him that "You can tell me anything" and "You were right to tell me the secret, I am proud of you. Remember, I will always believe in you." These words are well integrated into the plot and thus less didactic, but serve as a perfect prelude for Alfred to gradually calm down and summon up his courage to speak out "the secret". Such an emotional change makes the role of "education" more natural, a kind of immersed feeling of the need of self-protection. The emotional penetration can not only effectively reduce preaching, but also enhance the interestingness of the plot, making children immersed in the ups and downs of the main character.

The above finding seems to suggest a difference in the concept of designing educational picture books between Chinese and western picture book designers. Chinese picture book designers prefer didactic words, hoping to warn children away from danger while the western designers are prone to guide children how to deal with dangers through story itself.

3.4.5. Accessory Part

An excellent picture book should have accessory part, like author's note or note to parents/teachers as preparation part and game or exercise part at the ending. The main function of this component is to enhance the connection between the picture book and children or their parents. The analysis shows that western picture books designers attach greater importance to accessory parts and provide more diversified types. Western picture books usually have "Notes to Parents" at the beginning or the end, which help the parents or teachers in detail how to use the picture book or how to get access to relevant resources. Some picture books also make it directly for child readers. For example, *I won't Go with Strangers* has a game section called "Write Your List", inviting the children to voice their own safety list. The book *I can Build Confidence* provides theme-related nursery



Figure 6. Example of using emotional penetration in a western picture book.

rhymes for parents or teachers to sing with young children. The accessory section is an important part for picture books. However, among the three selected Chinese picture books, only *Say No Loudly* has a guide page for parents about the importance of sex education, the other two provide no such section.

4. Discussion

The main findings will be summarized and discussed in this section.

4.1. Wide Span in Target Age Group

The survey shows that most of the picture books under investigation have a wide age span or vague target audience, but in fact, these age groups are under great physical and psychological changes (Sun, 2004). There may be commercial consideration for this choice, or it is simply a result of immature market segmentation which needs to be further developed. The wide target age group for picture books may result in a lot of problems in color and character choice, plot setting, pictures and texts placement, etc.

In terms of color choice, although findings show that both western and Chinese picture books mainly use bright and warm colors and meet the needs of children aged 3 - 6 for color in general, it is still hard to say whether they are proper or improper in color choice if a more specific age division is considered. For example, as the range of color recognition for 3-year-old child is small, the use of pure color is more desirable for this age group. With the development of visual ability, children over the age of 4 can appreciate richer and more diverse colors. Therefore, picture books for this age group can use richer colors, which can actually influence and promote the development of children's imagination through rich imagery and color (Sun, 2004). At this stage, the strong contrast produced by color is also an efficient way to create plot and attract children's attention, which is not properly treated in some Chinese picture books as discussed in 3.3.1. The same is true of character choice as shown in the study. In this sense, there is still much room for improvement.

In terms of text and picture coordination, the finding of the problems, like crowded texts in both Chinese and western picture books, annotation with Chinese Pinyin, rigid arrangement of pictures in each page, too many descriptions of the scenes, rigid coordination between pictures and words in Chinese picture books, all need further discussion when more specific target age group is consi-

dered. Children around the age of 3 can only use simple sentences, so the text should be simple and concise and pictures should play a more important role. Also, as children at this stage are limited in their thinking ability, short stories with repeated plots and repeated language are preferable. At the age of 4, the language ability is further developed some long sentences can be used to make the story more vivid.

In terms of content, children aged 5 - 6 are curious and fond of observing and asking questions. More science-based safety knowledge can be added to safety education picture books at this stage. The wide age span discovered in this study can hardly meet such a drastic change and development for children in language and cognition.

In a word, a more specific target age group is recommended and a more precise processing is needed in view of the features of different age groups in terms of cognition, language and color preference, etc.

4.2. Unbalanced Coverage of Themes and Topics

The analysis shows that both Chinese and western pictures books have a similar proportion in theme coverage, that is, both mainly cover three themes—daily life education, sex safety education and social security education. Among the theme preference, a striking finding is that sex safety education is second most concerned by Chinese parents, which shows a great change in Chinese perception of sex education. However, disaster education picture books are relatively scarce, particularly for Chinese picture books. The possible reason for the neglect is that people may assume that natural disasters are relatively far away from us. However, the occurrence of disasters is always possible and it is absolutely necessary to carry out “education” for young children. Disaster education picture books can help achieve multiple effects, helping children understand the harm of disaster, having a sense of awe for nature, establishing self-protection consciousness, and mastering the basic escape skills. It also helps children develop admiration for doctors, fire fighters, police and other professions to avoid children’s excessive fear of disasters.

The analysis also found that the Chinese picture books show a tendency of repetition on topic. The most effective measure to solve this problem is to design picture book series. The topic of each safety education is closely related. Therefore, picture books should be regarded as an integral whole for picture book designers.

4.3. Prone to Be Low in Interestingness and High in Preaching

The analysis found that the safety education picture books were prone to be low in interestingness and strong in preaching, a problem closely related to the feature of the theme. However, the analysis also demonstrates the value of emotional penetration in safety education picture books, which is conducive to enhance the plot, reduce preaching, and better attract children’s reading interest.

Other techniques like using ingenious designs in children's picture books to enhance the visual and tactile feelings are also worth recommending. For example, when creating anti-burning picture books, the texture of "fire" and "heat" from the pictures can be enhanced to form a sharp contrast with the surrounding colors. The tactile sensation brought by the texture stimulus and the visual feeling brought by the color will enhance the reading experience. Picture books can also innovate material design, adding collages, stickers and so on. For example, for picture books like knowing your body, stickers can be designed to let children choose the right body parts. Or in picture books like bully topic, a small box can be added to let children write or draw their own ideas on the note to put in, which not only increases the interest of the picture book, but also increases children's confidence and courage in saying "no" to bad behavior.

In contrast, the Chinese picture books under investigation show an obvious inadequacy in plot development, psychological changes, and richness in imagination, thus resulting in low interestingness and strong didactic, which is line with some previous studies, claiming that the Chinese safety education picture books have the problem of feeling pale and preaching (Liu, 2021).

4.4. Unequal Attention to Accessory Part

The analysis shows that the western picture books provide richer accessory parts while the Chinese counterparts are seriously missing. The two sides paid a quite unequal attention to this valuable part. The value of picture books can only be fully fulfilled when the story of picture books is combined with practice and related to their own life experience. The accessory section is exactly the part to play such a guiding role.

5. Conclusion

Through the comparative analysis of the top 30 picture books for children in safety education from China and western world, the study finds some similarities and differences between the two in terms of target age group, theme and topic richness, character choice, color, pictures and words coordination, interestingness, preaching and accessory part. The results show some common challenges for safety education picture book for children, although a general better performance of western picture books than the Chinese counterparts. For example, the study finds that both Chinese and western picture books lack reasonable and clear target age group. They have a similar proportion in theme coverage, but the Chinese picture books show a tendency of high repetition in topic choice. They also share a similar dominant choice of human and animals as character type while western picture books pay more attention to ethnic diversity. Case analysis of the six selected picture books shows a general skillful use of fresh and bright colors despite some improper uses of colors in Chinese picture books. However, a poor coordination between pictures and texts, such as small fonts and large proportion of texts for both is widely found for both and a rigid

use of words occurred in Chinese picture books. Further content analysis shows that safety education picture books usually face great challenges in creating interestingness and avoiding preaching, and luckily some techniques, like emotion penetration, are found very useful in avoiding preaching and increasing interestingness.

The findings shed light on the current situation of picture books for children in safety education through a comparative perspective. Thus, the study has not only a value of mutual reference for picture book designers to produce high-quality picture books, but also a value of inspiration for both preschool educators as well as parents, as the study provide a better understanding of safety education picture books for children.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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