



Meaning Construction of Death in Children's Picture Books: Multi-Modal Analysis of *Time to Say Goodbye*

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ABSTRACT

As a typical form of multi-modal discourse, children's picture books are an important resource for children's early language and cultural education. It generally adopts multi-dimensional narrative form and combines images and texts to achieve the purpose of disseminating knowledge of learning language. This paper is mainly based on Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic analysis and Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics, and attempts to employ a multi-modal analysis of a picture book in order to research how the image and text components create meaning of "death". The study found that image mode and text mode in picture books complete with each other to express meanings, and in order to adapt to the cognitive level of children, the image mode have larger sizes, which are in line with children's cognitive level.

KEYWORDS: Multi-modal discourse analysis; picture books; SFL; death

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, life education for children has gradually attracted people's attention. The Disney movie *Coco* has aroused people's thinking about life, which is "the real death of a person is not that he dies, but that no one in the world remembers him". Our elders of the previous generation are always avoiding to talk about the topic of "death", especially they would not talk about it with their children. Whenever I asked about the topic of life and death, my parents would usually tell me that children should not ask these questions. But in fact, everyone will face and experience "death", I don't think children really don't know anything. On the other hand, most kids are actually smart and sensitive, and if someone close to them is disappeared, they quickly felt the mood of sadness. At this time children may have a lot of questions, they may also have emotional changes. What adults should do is find a way to help children understand the meaning of "death".

With the improvement of cognitive development, children's understanding of death is becoming mature. Many parents avoid the question of death for their children because they are already upset and anxious about it, and they want to protect their children from the harsh reality of death. But children often face the death of relatives, friends, animals and plants. So we should try our best to teach children the right way to deal with death. "Death" is an abstract concept for children. Infants under three years old have no definite concept of death, believing that death is only the difference between "here and not here" and "existence and disappearance". For

children over three years old, they understand that death needs to go through a process. In the study of Chinese scholars Zhang et al.(1998), they divided the development of children's death cognition from 3.5 to 6.5 years old into three levels. Level 1: No clear understanding of the four dimensions of death characteristics. Can't understand the problem of people dying, especially can't understand the problem of animals and plants dying. Level 2: Can explain the basic characteristics of death clearly, but show a strong sense of self-centeredness and emotional color: death is the business of someone else, and the life we love cannot die. Level 3: Death can be explained on the basis of certain natural causes, disease causes and accidental causes. Death is the end of life and people can no longer live after they die. People, animals and plants can die, and death can make people feel sad.

This paper tried to explore the meaning construction of "death" in children's picture books, and based on Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic analysis and Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics, it attempts to research how picture books explain the abstract concept of death for children and teach them about life. And the selected corpus of this paper is the English children's picture book "*Time to Say Goodbye*", which tells the story of the little Aspen. His grandfather became a ghost, in order to find out things they have forgotten, Aspen experienced several strange night. This story expressed deep feelings of grandparents and grandchildren in plain tone. About the author, Kim Verperz is an American Danish writer whose works have won numerous awards, including the 1990 *Danish Ministry of Culture Award*



for Children's Book and the 1992 Nordic Award for Best Young Adult Fiction. The reason why I chose this picture book is that it is a famous picture book reading material in the United States and is also used frequently in Chinese families. Besides, this book has beautiful illustrations and distinctive characters, which is easy to attract children's interest.

As for the research questions:

RQ1: How to interpret modal information in this picture book "Time to Say Goodbye"

RQ2: How do image mode and text mode cooperate with each other to produce meaning of "death" in English children's picture books?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies of Children's Picture Books

Children's picture books have attracted much attention from many academic circles, mainly focusing on the cultural research, literature and education, and the research on children's psychological development. From the perspective of theme, children's picture books with different themes can play an educational role in different meanings for children, such as death, learning ability and common sense of life. They are conducive to children's better understanding of abstract things, but there are few studies on picture books of "death" theme. For the topic of death, adults choose to keep silent to children, but in fact, children can feel the disappearance of people around them sensitively, and we should give children the correct guidance. With the development of society, the number of picture books on death education for children is also increasing, such as Meng and Zhao (2021), studies a cultural comparison of the multi-modal construction of the meaning of death, their material named *What Is Death?*, an original Chinese and American picture book with the same title. (Luo Diandian, 2016; Boritzer, 2000). They found that the interpretations of "death" constructed are relatively similar, with biological, social and cultural characteristics and emotional reactivity. What's more, as demonstrated in Riitta Oittinen and Blanca-Ana Roig Rechou's edited collection *A Grey Background in Children's Literature*, these studies include subjects sometimes considered taboo in works for young children, such as disease, war, sex, violence, and disability.

For the study of picture books, in addition to various themes, theoretical applications are also diverse and colorful. Some scholars explore the relationship between graphic and text complementarity in picture books from the perspective of multi-mode. Guijarro (2008) analyzed the compositional, interpersonal and representational meaning in the children's narrative "Guess how much I love you.", then he found that the writer and the illustrator collaborate to tell the story from two different perspectives, the visual and the verbal, with the aim of making the plot easily accessible for the young child. Also, Guijarro (2013), explores the visual metonymy in children's picture books, a multimodal and cognitive

perspective is adopted here to apply the nonverbal trope of visual metonymy to the two picture books from the sample texts. Liang (2020), he explored the creation and educational significance of children's picture books from the perspective of postmodernism. The article points out that some picture books, under the influence of postmodernism, subvert the traditional fairy tales and break the traditional storytelling techniques, forcing readers to face the reality of life and bringing readers. He also pointed out that postmodern children's picture books can not only open teachers' horizons, urge teachers to further respect children's dominant status, but also subtly cultivate children's critical thinking.

Previous Studies of Multimodal Discourse Analysis

In the past few decades, there has been a great controversy in the academic circles about the study and analysis of multimodal discourse from the perspective of the relationship between image and text. Barthes (1977) takes news images and graphic advertising texts as the analysis objects, and distinguishes three kinds of relations between graphics and texts through observation: anchoring, dependence and explanation. Martinec & Salway (2005), based on Barthes' research on graphic relations and Halliday's research on the logic semantics of clauses in the language system, he investigated the new and old media discourse and further developed the graphic relations system. It includes two subsystems: status and logical semantics.

Bateman (2007) believes that the establishment of graphic relationship is closely related to text category. Taking traditional paper newspapers and online newspapers as examples, he points out that text category is an important factor determining the relationship between image and text, and different text categories should adopt different modal selection and design. According to Nicklaheva et al. (2000), the research on Graphic Interaction can be roughly divided into three categories, which is symmetrical interaction, control interaction and enhanced interaction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims to offer a brief introduction to the two theories which are applied for the text mode and image mode, respectively. They contain the transitivity system of systemic functional Grammar by Halliday and the visual grammar proposed by Kress & van Leeuwen.

Transitivity System in Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Linguistics and Three Metafunctions

In terms of the text analysis, I apply the Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). And the three meta function of SFL are ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. First, the ideational function is about the *field* of discourse and consists of experiential function and logical function. And the empirical function is mainly embodied

through “transitivity” and “voice”; second, the interpersonal function is about the *tenor* of discourse, and the means of realizing interpersonal meaning in discourse mainly include mood, modality, person and evaluation. Third, the textual function is about the *mode* of discourse, which consists the analysis of thematic structure. The theme structure includes theme and rheme. Theme is the starting point of each clause and clause complex. After the theme is drawn out, the rest of the clause is rheme, and rheme is the goal of the clause.

Transitivity System

According to the three metafunctions mentioned above, there are three modes of meaning in clause organization, which, as Halliday (2004) introduces, can be realized by “the textual line of Theme ^ Rheme and the interpersonal line of Mood + Residue” (p. 168). For the experiential line, it can be achieved by transitivity system, which organizes the clause as “a mode of reflection, of imposing order on the endless variation and flow of events” (Halliday, 2004, p.170). Another scholar, Simpson (1993) summarizes that the term transitivity means the way of representation of meaning in

the clause, indicating how the language users encode the picture of reality in their mind into language and how they explain their experience of the surrounding world.

Halliday (2004) points out that “the transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types” (p.170) and each of them has their own typical pattern and structure for the certain domain of experience. A process consists of three components: “(i) the process itself; (ii) the participants in that process; (iii) any circumstance factors”(Halliday, 2004, p.79). Within a clause, basically, the process appears in the form of verbal group, the participants are in the form of nominal group and the circumstance can be realized by adverbial group or prepositional group.

In terms of the process, there are six types of process in total, which are material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process and existential process with the first three types are the major ones and the latter three are types on the borderlines. For each type of process, there are corresponding participants, which are demonstrated in Table 3.1.

Table 1. Process types, their meanings and characteristic participants (Halliday, 2004, p.260)

Process Type	Category Meaning	Participants, directly involved	Participants, obliquely involved
Material: action event	‘doing’ ‘doing’ ‘happening’	Actor, Goal	Recipient, Client; Scope; Initiator; Attribute
Behavioral	‘behaving’	Behavior	Behaviour
Mental: perception cognition desideration emotion	‘sensing’ ‘seeing’ ‘thinking’ ‘wanting’ ‘feeling’	Senser, Phenomenon	
Verbal	‘saying’	Sayer, Target	Receiver; Verbiage
Relational: attribution identification	‘being’ ‘attributing’ ‘identifying’	Carrier, Attribute Identified, Identifier; Token, Value.	Attributor, Beneficiary Assigner
Existential	‘existing’	Existent	

Visual Grammar

Kress and van Leeuwen put forward the concept of “multimodal discourse” in 1996, and compared with the three meta functional ideas of systemic functional linguistics, they created a visual grammatical analysis framework to lay a foundation for the development of multimodal discourse analysis, which emphasizes the representational function, interactive function and compositional function of images. The representational meaning of images includes the participants of the events, process type and the circumstance which means “where they are”. It can describe what happened in the story. Then, according to the Visual Grammar, the key components of compositional meaning of image are information value, saliency and framework. Kress and Van leeuwen (1996,116) said that social relations

and the relations between the producer and the viewer are “represented rather than enacted”. Next, it comes to the interactive meaning of image, whether there is direct eye contact and the direction of the look, the size of frame, and the angle of viewing all play important roles in identifying the relation between the represented participants and the interactive participants. Moreover, Kress and van Leeuwen also pointed out that color has the same conceptual power as other modes. The level of color saturation and whether the color is warm or bright ,it will bring different feelings to readers.

METHODOLOGY

As previously stated, this picture book “time to say goodbye” will be analyzed in the theory of systemic functional linguistics and visual social semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006



[1996]). I will analyze the multiple modes of expression used in picture books, and different modes may express the same thing in multiple ways, and they may reinforce each other or fulfil complementary roles (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001).

For the whole picture book, I will analyze it from three aspects: text mode, image mode and color mode. This paper adopts the combination of quantitative research and qualitative research. Firstly, the analysis of the text part adopts Halliday's transitivity of systemic functional linguistics. For the text information, this paper analyze it according to T unit, and count the number of material process, mental process or relational process. Moreover, the characteristics of character image building are explained from the perspective of Participants.

In terms of the image mode, this article will analyze the image information from the aspects of interactive means, compositional meaning and representational meaning. I describe the main plot in the picture book in the form of tables, on the basis of representational meaning, it can also make it clear the participants, process and circumstance in the picture. And the analysis of compositional meanings aims to define given and new information according to the framing. Besides, interactive meaning can be analyzed from the contact, social distance and attribute aspects to find the information transmitted in the image. Finally, after analyzing the image information and text information, I combine the image and text meaning to explore how the graphic and text modes complement each other to realize the meaning expression.

Table 2. Types of process in the text

Types	number	examples	proportion
Material process	13	pass through.. He stayed with me..	19%
Mental process	12	He loved to read..	18%
Relational process	20	am..is..	28%
Behavioural process	8	Grandpa called up	12%
Verbal process	15	Grandpa said	23%
Total	68		100%

According to the table above, most of the texts in this children's book are relational process whose proportion is 28%. These relational processes show the relationship between Aspen and grandpa. The whole story revolves around grandpa coming back as a ghost to say goodbye to Aspen, which shows grandpa's deep attachment to Aspen. Relational process is more abstract than material process, unlike concrete actions that are easy to understand, it presents a form of things and the relationship between characters, and this feature also conforms to the abstract image of "death". The "ghost" has no concrete existence, and then it will cooperate with the picture mode to show the specific image characteristics.

Verbal process is in second place, and the storyline is mostly developed in the form of character dialogue, indicating that the author hopes that readers will understand the story between Aspen and grandpa as a bystander. Thirdly, these

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS IN PICTURE BOOKS

The Analysis of Text Mode

In picture books, text information does not occupy a lot of space, but it plays a great role in promoting the understanding of the plot. For the analysis of text mode, the transitivity analysis is adopted.

The ideational function consists of experiential function and logical function. And experiential function is mainly embodied by transitivity system, which refers to the expression of language on people's various experiences in the real world. Here I give a sample analyze the contents of the first page of the picture book.

Example 1 The transitivity analysis for Page 1

There	was	a little boy [named Aspen]
The person [who Aspen likes best]	is	his grandfather Holger.
value	Relational process	token

Through the analysis, we can see in the table that there are 61 clauses in this picture book. My analysis unit is T-unit, as termed by Fries (1995: 49), "It is very useful to deal with "a unit slightly larger than the clause but smaller than the sentence" (Fries 1995: 49), namely an independent conjoinable clause complex or T-unit. Fries (1994) thought T-unit is one independent clause together with all the other dependent clauses. Then I counted the different types of processes in the text. (see table 1)

material processes are some very specific actions, they are process of doing, such as "Grandpa looked at the photos...", which can be expressed vividly, and is helpful for children's understanding of behavior. Actor has more initiative in material process clause, as the protagonist of the story, Aspen and grandpa show their activities to the readers.

The forth type of process is mental process, in the text, it shows a kind of sense. The article expresses Aspen's deep missing for his grandfather, who has been unable to remember what he forgot to become a ghost. Aspen and his grandpa search together. Finally, he think of that he forgot to say goodbye to Aspen and they spent an unforgettable time together.

Different participants will convey different meanings, and the participants of the different process are as follows:

Table 3. Statistics of different participants

Process		Examples	Number
Material process	actor	Aspen	8
		grandpa	5
	Goal	Bed,kindergarten	10
	Circumstance	in town,on the wall	7
Mental process	Senser	Aspen	3
		grandpa	7
	Phenomenon	Something else	10
Relational process	value	Aspen	3
		grandpa	12
	Token	ghost	2
Behavioural process	behavior	grandpa	8
Verbal process	sayer	Aspen	9
		grandpa	6
Total			92

As we can concluded from the table, the “Actor” in material process and the “Senser” in mental process are both Aspen and grandpa, and the story is about Aspen and grandpa searching for memories together, and it takes the form of a dialogue, so the two Sayers are similar in number. However, all the behaviors are grandpa, in the story,grandpa has been doing a lot of things with Aspen to make up for not saying goodbye.What’s more, the use of third person narration makes readers can better understand the context of the story and distinguish the story from real life.

Secondly,in those participants, the usage frequency of “circumstance” is an important part, and the circumstances described in this picture book are about location and time. Circumstance, as Thompson(2004) states in his masterpiece“realized by circumstantial Adjuncts, essentially encode the background against which the process takes place”(p.109). There are both circumstances representing time such as “in the evening”, which means ghosts can only appear at night,and also circumstantial information representing space like “in the town”. And these words are all descriptions of the background and more detailed information is added to the story.

Analysis of Image Mode

Image mode is a very important factor in picture books, and occupies a lot of space. It can even be said that picture books are mainly pictures, and words only occupy a small part of the page. Having concluded the verbal study, now the analysis will focus on the three semiotic functions (O’Toole, 1994, 1999; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006 [1996]), which correlate with Halliday’s (1985, 2004) three metafunctions: the representational, the interactive and the compositional.

Representational Meaning

Firstly,about the participant of this story,at the beginning of the story, the image of a little boy is shown,and he is protagonist of the story named Aspen. He pondered over a black picture of his grandfather, getting straight to the

point of grandpa’s passing away. Then, in the second page, his mother told Aspen “Grandpa went to heaven.” The white bubbles at the top of the page represent Aspen’s vision of his grandfather as an angel, all white and feathered. At this point, the hero of the story has emerged, and this is how most parents communicate death to their children with “become an angel”.



Figure 5.1



Figure 5.2

Secondly, on the process, narrative process is a statement of actions and things shown in the unstable settings, and the action process involves the notion of action, “persons who are moving” and “the object of action”. The third aspect,circumstance shows the background of the picture, it’s about where they are. Such as the third page of the story takes place in a church, where a funeral is held for grandpa. The priest and coffin appear in the background of the picture. But most of the story takes place at home, where Aspen and his grandfather search for fond memories together.

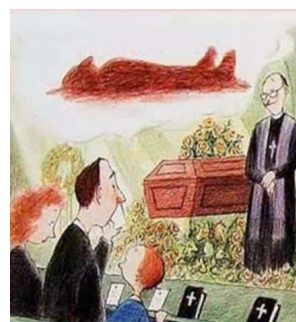


Figure 5.3

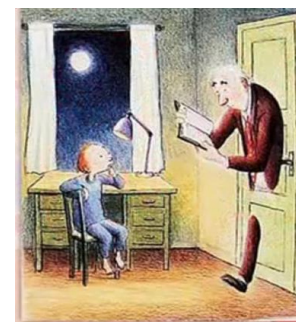


figure 5.4

Compositional Meaning

(1) Information value

This aspect is about the given and new information, generally speaking, text messages are placed on the right side of the screen as new messages. The juxtaposition of the elements within the composition are primarily to be understood in terms of centre/margin and given/new based on the position.

a. Center and Margin

From center to margin means from primary information to secondary information. Grandpa and Aspen are the main characters in the story, so they will be most prominent in the middle of the picture, such as figure 5.5, at night, Aspen and grandpa wandered in town to see if grandpa can remember what he had forgotten. Other people and cars on the street are in the right corner; they are not important roles in the story.

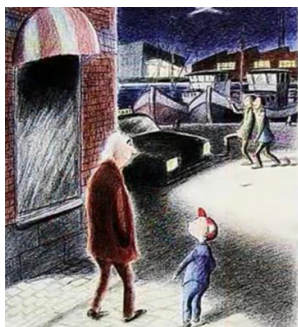


Figure 5.5

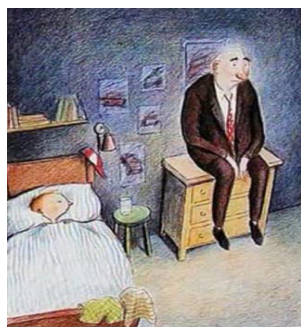


Figure 5.6

b. Left and Right

In figure 5.6, grandpa is in Aspen's room for the first time since his death, sitting on the right bedside table. The given information is on the left and the new information is on the right. Aspen is not a new character; but Grandpa suddenly came back, which is a new information which first appears, which can catch the children's attention in the right side.

c. Top and Down

The upper section tends to make some kinds of emotive appeal and to show us 'what might be'; the lower section tends to be more informative and practical, showing us 'what is'. The obvious top-down structure of the picture is figure 5.3, the whole family is in the chapel, a blob of brown at the top shows the image of grandpa lying in his coffin, and the image of the grieving parents and Aspen at the bottom. At that point, Aspen did not understand death, nor did he believe his grandfather had disappeared.

(2) Saliency

The saliency shows the level of importance of the elements in the picture. For this picture book, compared with the text information, images occupy most of the background, and children mainly rely on pictures to understand the story. The more important things that need to be highlighted in

the picture will be placed in a more prominent position and attract the reader's attention.



Figure 5.7

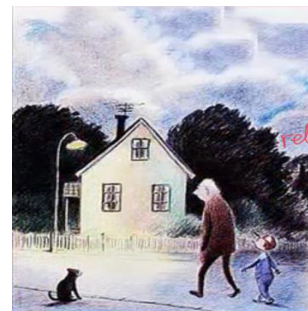


Figure 5.8

Besides, size is one aspect of the compositional meaning. We have known from Nikolajeva and Scott (2001:83) that participants of great size have more power than those that are in small size. When the rabbit is in the background, its size will be small, and correspondingly, the background that is highlighted will become larger. For example, in figure 5.7, the protagonist Aspen is waiting for the arrival of his grandfather, but the grandfather does not appear. The figure in this picture is in the center, but the size is relatively small, indicating that what this picture wants to highlight is not the figure, but the environment and the urgency of not showing of his grandfather. Also in figure 5.5, the size of Aspen and grandpa is the largest, which can contrast with other characters to highlight the two protagonists.

(3) Framing

Framing is another aspect of the compositional meaning. If the author wants to stress group identity, then the framing is absent; and if the author wants to contrast between two elements, the framing is maximum. Framing is to use the method of architecture to draw dividing lines to connect or cut off the elements in the picture to symbolize whether they belong to each other in some aspects.

Throughout the story, grandpa and Aspen look for things they've forgotten, and the scenes are so sweet and harmonious that it's hard to imagine grandpa has become a ghost, so the framing is absent. However, in figure 5.2, there is a clear dividing line between mother and grandpa. Grandpa turns into an angel and flies through the air, while Mom is holding Aspen and comforting him at the bottom of the picture, so the framing of this picture is maximum. But in general, the author wants to convey the idea that grandpa will always be with Aspen, that death is not a terrible thing. What is important is a sense of missing.

Interactive Meaning of Images

In relation to the contact, whether there is directly eye contact or not can decide the content of demand or offer.

This picture book did not have direct eye contact with the reader. When describing the activities of the Aspen, whether it is looking at the grandpa or his parents, his eyes are always looking to the other side, and there is no direct eye contact

with the reader. All these belong to "offer". The author just wants to provide information to the reader, and only depicts the progress of searching for memories.

As for social distance, in figure 5.9 and 5.10, when Aspen chats with his parents at the dinner table, the author adopts "middle distance", which makes the heroes more intimate and immersed with readers. However, the other pictures are in an impersonal distance, Aspen and grandpa are mainly long shots as they are usually portrayed in full size. The audience is like a spectator of the story, this seems to imply the features of objectivity. The aims of not using an intimate relationship, perhaps is to show the young child that they do not belong to his/her world but to the world of magic and imagination. This point also reinforces the meaning of "offer" mentioned before.



Figure 5.9



Figure 5.10

Thirdly, it is about "attitude". This aspect is reflected by the perspective of how the picture are displayed. The children looks at the pictures from a frontal view point which gives him/her the feeling of being involved in the hero's world. Kress and van Leeuwen (1966) said "In contrast to the horizontal axis, which reflects involvement, the vertical angle usually expresses power". This story is narrated from a parallel perspective, which shows an equal status. And there is no power difference established between them and the young child. All the images are represented from a medium angle, which implies that the child (and probably the adult) is equality with the characters in the picture book.

Analysis of Color Mode

The color settings in the picture book also reflect multiple information, which can express ideational, interpersonal and textual functions at the same time, on the basis of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). For example, the use of color resources to represent things that already exist in the material world -- blue sky, white clouds, etc., is a conceptual function. Besides, using the contrasts and differences between colors to highlight a component, or the repeated use of the same color to form a visual rhythm, which is the textual function of color.

The first aspect of color model is saturation, the images in this book adopt low saturation colors, and the colors in the picture are not very bright. The dark blue is used to represent dark night, and yellow is used to represent warm

interior, which is in line with the theme of picture books that "grandpa has become a ghost".

Then, as for the tone of the color, Nodelman (1988:60), said that specific colors come to evoke certain attitudes. For example, green has traditionally been considered as the colour of growth and fertility; and blue is usually considered to imply calmness and serenity. Yellow is connected with happiness and red with warmth or danger. The colors in this picture book are mainly blue and warm yellow, which shows the cozy of home and happiness with grandpa. What's more, warm colors are easy to build a comfortable mood, even darkness gives people a warm feeling. To express children's understanding of death from their perspective, the author did not paint grandpa as a terrible ghost, but as a beautiful angel with a kind face. It is also helpful to educate children about death and understand parting correctly.

CONCLUSION

Integration of Relationship and Meaning between Modes

As mentioned above, I made a detailed analysis of the text modes, image modes and color modes of picture books by applying the transitivity analysis of systemic functional linguistics and visual grammar analysis framework respectively. We know in the picture book *Time to Say Goodbye*, how can the modes work together to create meaning of death and achieve synergy and complementation. As in the analysis of character image, Aspen, the protagonist of the story, is the main actor from the perspective of ideational function, and the narrative of the story is mainly relational process to represent the relationship between grandpa and Aspen. The material process also shows the activities of two characters. The dialogue between Aspen and his grandfather in the article reflected deep missing, and the text mode fully expressed Aspen's process of never believing in death to understanding what is it. After saying goodbye to his grandfather, Aspen accepted his grandfather's departure with good memories.

In relation to the image mode, the participants of the whole picture is "Aspen" and his grandpa which is consistent with the theme and actor of text mode of this story. In terms of size, text modes are small in size and images occupy most of the page. As for the information value, in page 1,2,3,5,8,10, text messages are displayed on the right as new information, and in page 4,6,7,9, the texts are list on the left. However, in page 1,2,9, the text information is placed at the top of the page, while the text information of the other 9 pages appears at the bottom of the page, indicating that the image information in most pages is the content that the author wants to highlight. We also make it clear what is the given information and new information, Aspen and his grandpa are always in the center of the pictures, and it's also a message that the author wants to emphasize.

To sum up, the information reflected in the text mode and the picture mode complement and confirm each other. And they form the whole meaning of the story together. Readers can read the text information to better understand the content of the picture. And different audiences will pay attention to different modal information. For example, adults may read text more to understand content, while children focus more on the image information. Picture books are a great tool for children to understand the topic of death. They should know that death is not scary, the good memories with them are always treasured in our memory.

Suggestions for further studies

Guo fang (2017), he once studied the influence of language level on the reading of picture books, and the results showed that cognitive agents with lower language level would combine pictures and texts and regard them as complementary meaning entities. While for children with low literacy and language skills, English children's picture books provide them with basic knowledge for understanding the world through colorful images.

This is also in line with the setting of pictures and texts in picture books. In picture books, image modes occupy a large number of positions and proportions, while text modes are only in a small part. Therefore, for children's cognition, they mainly rely on pictures to know the world, while text only plays a small auxiliary role. But if the reader is an adult, the adult gets the information mainly through words.

Systemic-functional linguistics has a strong explanatory power in the understanding and interpretation of discourse meaning, and the application of systemic-functional linguistics to the study of image-text complementarity in multimodal picture books can promote the development of SFL. By analyzing the texts modes, image modes and color modes of picture books, this paper studies how the modes collaborate to create meanings of death. It is beneficial for children to better understand and contact the sensitive and abstract topic of life and death. What's more, it is hoped that through this study, people's cognition of the multi-modes in picture books will have theoretical support, and there will be a better basis for the application of picture books in reading teaching. Finally, this paper proposes that the setting of picture books conforms to children's cognition level, and I hope to have a deeper understanding of the research on children's cognition in the future. This paper provides theoretical and practical reference for interpreting the meaning creation of multimodal discourse, and creating other multimodal reading materials in Chinese context.

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