

# The Comparison Research of Games and Chinese and English Children's Literature base on Cognitive Linguistics

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**Abstract:** This electronic document is a “live” template. The various components of your paper [title, text, heads, etc.] are already defined on the style sheet, as illustrated by the portions given in this document. (Abstract)--- The research on the theory of games and children's literature or the children's literature on cognitive linguistics perspective have developed tremendously, and related empirical studies for pedagogy are also conducted. However, the research on games and children's literature based on cognitive linguistic perspective has not been done. The research aims to compare Chinese and English children's literature on with games on this perspective and add further theory support to cognitive linguistics.

**Keywords:** Games, Children's literature, Cognitive linguistics

## 1. Introduction

Games served as an import part of Children's life, therefore the art of games is also a crucial character in Children's Literature. The world of children literature provides children with a special place for games. And in such a world, children's nature for the needs of games could be respected and expressed. Many studies have done researches on the discussion of game and children literature, yet few have connected with the cognitive linguistic perspective. Based on the cognitive linguistics, the study of game spirit and children literature enhances better understanding and educate children.

## 2. Games and Children Literature

The development of games has a long history and studies about games in western countries have been done since ancient Greek by Plato. It begins from a broad sense of “games”, to the subjective theory-- “theory of play” by Kant and Schiller “the subject of the play is the one who plays it”, and then to a overturn theory by Gadamer “the subject is the play itself”. Gadamer's theory, possessing humanistic value, indicates that game represents the equality and openness of human freedom, and break the previous theory. Chen (1996) and Fang (2015) suggested that literature is a kind of games but a serious one. Hence, games and literature are inseparable.

Games is an instinct for children, which is not just an activity for energy consumption but possessing multi-layer meanings, such as the meaning of study, creation and entertainment (Fang, 2015; Xu & He, 2018 ). Children's literature possesses all the functions of general literature (cognition, education, entertainment and aesthetic).

However, owing to the uniqueness of children's psychology and spirit, the works of children's literature are the literature with fun. The form, content, language and inherent spirit of children's literature present a close relationship with children's life and games. Games are the fountains of children development, therefore successful children's literature must possess game spirit, which children's literature translation also represent game spirit, maintain its core value and nourish children's healthy development (Xu & He, 2018).

Many western works of children's literature reflect children's psychological development (mainly proposed by Piaget), children's fantasy and pursuit as well as wishes of happiness (psychology of Freud's). Two characters were shown in western children's literature: the spiritual experiences of happiness for children and the ideal game partners for children. Those stories offer children opportunities to explore and wonder in other world, an experience of enjoyment and happiness as well as an effective method to realize their dreams. Take the famous German children story *Der Räuber Hotzenplotz* as an example---translated into English as *The Big Robber*, written by children's literature writer Otfried PreuBler. In this book, the main theme is about a robber and robbing that Hotzenplotz did dozens of evil things, which makes him seemed to be bad person. Yet he was also lovely because he favors cute stuffs like coffee plot, snuff and sausages. Moreover, he never used real ammunition but one made by pepper. Some works of children literature give children opportunities to find companies in literature, for instance, Alice of Alice in Wonderland, Pinocchio of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, and Peter of Peter and Wendy and so on. In

a word, games is children's literature and children's literature is games.

Chinese children's literature share similarities and differences with Western children's literature with regard to games. Chinese children's literature also reflects children's psychological development. Absurdity shown in Chinese children's literature meets the needs of children's mentality to pursuit freshness and excitement. One case is that in Zheng yuanjie's work of children's literature Weeping Competition, Chocolate Club and Bubble Gum Parade, absurdity is the main prevalence. In the 1990s, game spirit is contained with more abundance and arts in children's literature, presenting characters of fantasy, humor and naughty. As technology and society develop tremendously in the 21st century, children's literature in China tends to contain more philosophy and fun and versatile. And new style of children's literature occurs, being picture books.

### 3. Cognitive Linguistics and Children's Literature

Based on the second-generation cognition science and the philosophy of experience (mentality, reasoning, language and meaning), cognitive linguistics was early formed in the 1970s and is connected with linguistics, psychology, artificial intelligence (AI) and other disciplines. The second-generation cognitive linguistics indicates that language is not a gift, and accept Piaget's Constructivism, Interactionism and Rumelhart & McClelland's Connectionism. Cognitive linguistics mainly studies the close relationships between language and cognitive methods, conceptual structure, semantic system, human knowledge, and cultural rules. It also has the functions to explain the language facts of cognition rules, which all have close relationship with Categorization. The basic ability of cognition is the ability to categorize (Jackendoff, 1985). Lakoff and Taylor (Wang, 2018) developed the theory of Categorization to Prototypical Theory in order to better understand cognitive linguistics. In their point of view, metonymy and metaphor are very significant in the prototypical theory. Some scholars proposed the Event-domain Cognitive Model, ECM to beautify cognitive linguistics, which explains different occasions for children's eyes. Two main elements in this model is the Action and Being, belonging to the nouns and verbs of lexicology categorization respectively. The Image Schema View proposed by Lakoff is applied to analyse semantic meaning.

The main research areas of cognitive linguistics could be concluded as follows: Taylor's Categorization and Prototype Categorization, Lakoff, Johnson and Turner's Metaphor Concept, Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (phonological Unit, Semantic Unit and Symbolic Unit) and Goldberg's Structure Grammar and so on. Chinese scholars have done numerous researches on comparisons of

cognitive linguistics of Chinese and English. They pay great attention on metaphor and metonymy in their studies, which this is especially useful in literature studies. Recent hotted discussion on conceptional metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) may cause problems in research methods. Therefore, a research should not only base on theoretical studies but also empirical ones, being suitable for metaphor studies as well as other cognitive research areas.

Cognition is the basis of the language, and language is the window of cognition. Language facilitates the development of cognition of human being. Piaget suggested that language could not all contain all the cognitive ability of human being and could not decide the development of cognition, whereas it could impose huge impact on human's logic. Cognitive linguistics aims to explore logic cognition based on life to reveal figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, personification, zoosemy, exaggeration and irony. Metaphorical thinking helps us to better get informed of the world and also is a favorite figures of speech applied in children literature. Metaphor affects children's understanding of these works. Metaphor exists in our language, logic and action. Therefore, for children, the understanding of metaphor is the foundation of cognition. The process of reading literature is the process of examining children's own receptivity in cultural background, social customs and histories.

G. Leech and M.Short made a proposal that four categories namely lexicology, grammar, rhetorical devices and cohesion and coherence are applied to analyse literary part of literature works. Hence, children's lexicology, syntax and semantics are examined in this process. Most studies of children's literature based on cognitive linguistics are the studies of metaphor. Children's cognitive linguistics level could be enhanced through the training of children's language proficiency, logical ability and memory function. Children still may not have enough understanding on children literature not only in its implicit meaning, but even in its explicit meaning owing to different cultures. So when children read English children literature, whether English or Chinese version, differences of recognition in language do exist because of the language differences in these two languages.

### 4. Cognitive Linguistics, and Games and Children Literature

Even though games and children's literature are of significant importance for children's development, the research of games and children's literature based on the the cognitive approach is rare and the empirical studies are none. Several scholars did researches related on games and children literature (Zhang, 2019; Fang, 2015). Some others focus on metaphor and translation in children's literature based on the cognitive linguistics. Seldom discussed even theoretically on games and children's literature on

the cognitive linguistics side. One scholar, Li (2019) studied the application of game teaching method of French classroom from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Her study indicates that games in teaching raises up students' awareness of English learning and facilitates second language teaching. Another researcher, Yang (2018) discussed the immersion of game spirit in teaching the Education major students of Children's Literature courses. She suggested that game spirits should be listed as a main aim of teaching for the Normal major students and a required training content for these students in their course. This teaching methods aims to engage students in game spirits when reading children's literature and meanwhile raise up their awareness of the effects of "games" when they teach children in classrooms.

Purcell (2016) did a more detailed research on children's picture book of metaphorical on the cognitive perspective. In her research, four picture books were shown to demonstrate the functions of this work on decoding and creative logics in terms of children's development when it comes to metaphorical. Children were immersed and educated with visual metaphorical and metaphorical expression, which provides conceptual structure to enrich children's understanding and expression. The research offers us an opportunity to have a closer understanding of how reading affects children and enrich their life. So far, the study of games and English and Chinese children's literature on cognitive perspectives is vacant regardless of empirical researches. Hence, this research not only possesses theoretical values, adding more theories of language acquisition on multiple perspectives, but also have pragmatical values for pedagogy.

As mentioned, many children's literature books benefits children's development in life, reflect game spirits, facilitate children's cognition. However, children may have cognition issues in reading children's literature because figures of speech are frequently used. When reading these materials, they need to understand the implicit meaning through the rhetorical devices, which represents their cognition and different cultures. Take Alice's Adventures in Wonderland as an example. First, this book provides children an opportunity to make friends, of which the most important one is Alice. Children may in a stage of seeking companion as this is the nature for children, to play games with others. Second, in this book, children can also make an adventure with Alice to the Wonderland, a magical world with clocks. Children in such a developmental phase have the desire and thirst to share and explore the world with their peers. So during their exploration, the magical world brings them unprecedented experiences and the word is like a game world for them. Third, in terms of language of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, many vocabularies, phrases or sentences possess game spirits and cognition correlation. There is a sentence "No wish fish would go anywhere

without a porpoise". For English native speakers or those who have intermediate or higher English proficiency, they may have the knowledge that these two words "porpoise" and "purpose" have the same pronunciation in English yet they are different in lexical meanings. This sentence reflects children's humor, from the original "casualness"--"porpoise", to the later intention "purpose" to create imbalanced relationship here. Children can accumulate vocabularies through this kind of "vocabulary games". Furthermore, translation serves as an significant part in children's literature as well. Good translators help children better understand literature works without misunderstanding. Interestingly, the two words in Chinese version of this book are wisely translated by Yuanren Chao as "porpoise" into "carp (liyong)" in Chinese, and reason (liyong) which pronounced the same in mandarin (Xu & He, 2018).

To sum up, this study have both theoretical and practical meanings. Theoretically, it provides a profound understanding and enriches more theories on on the cognitive perspective. Practically, it provides some understandings for children's English pedagogy, translation or cultural researches.

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