

Tu Wangbei

University of Malaysia Sabah,
Malaysia/Anqing Normal University
China

alicetu83@sina.com

UDK 930.85(510):821.111(73).09-93:087.5

DOI: 10.4312/vestnik.17.197-224

Izvorni znanstveni članek



MISREPRESENTATION OF CHINESE CULTURE IN AMERICAN PICTURE BOOKS THROUGH WRITTEN AND VISUAL LANGUAGES

ABSTRACT

Language is a communication system which consists of signs, symbols, gestures, and so on. In picture books, a special genre of children's books, pictures can be regarded as a visual language because meaning can be conveyed from the authors to readers by pictures. However, there are a number of limitations with regard to the cultural connotations implied in the picture-word language system in picture books, and previous studies found there were stereotypes of Chinese culture and Chinese people in American picture books. Using a mixed methodology approach, the author selected 78 picture books created by American authors, including Chinese Americans, from an initial sample of 3,000, and subjected them to discourse analysis to examine the misrepresentations of Chinese culture. The results showed three main types of misrepresentation of Chinese culture in picture books and explored the reasons for this. The misrepresentations included: (1) the full view of Chinese culture is overshadowed by the excessive attention and localization of cultural symbols, such as the Chinese dragon and the Spring Festival; (2) the confusion of Asian cultures in visual language and written language weakens the uniqueness of Chinese culture; and (3) information disorder weakens the authenticity of Chinese culture. The reasons for these misrepresentations are rooted in the attitudes towards multiculturalism in American, including in relation to Chinese Americans. The misinterpretations result in the following issues: (1) Chinese culture is equated with the culture of Chinese Americans; (2) Chinese culture is regarded as static, which leads to serious homogenization; (3) the sightseeing attitude towards Chinese culture results in an excessive focus on cultural symbols. Therefore, the misrepresentations and even stereotypes of Chinese and Chinese culture have been solidified by these books.

Keywords: American picture books, visual language, multimodal, misrepresentation, Chinese culture

IZVLEČEK

NAPAČNO PRIKAZOVANJE KITAJSKJE KULTURE V PISNEM IN VIZUALNEM JEZIKU AMERIŠKIH SLIKANIC

Jezik je komunikacijski sistem, ki ga tvorijo znaki, simboli, kretnje in podobno. V slikanicah, posebni vrsti otroških knjig, lahko slike obravnavamo kot vizualni jezik, saj avtorji z njihovo pomočjo bralcem posredujejo vsebino. A kulturne konotacije, ki izhajajo iz slikovno-besednega jezikovnega sistema slikanic, so z več vidikov omejene. Dosedanje raziskave so tako opozorile na prisotnost stereotipov o Kitajcih in kitajski kulturi v ameriških slikanicah. Z uporabo mešanega metodološkega pristopa smo iz prvotnega vzorca 3000 slikanic izbrali 78 slikanic, katerih avtorji so Američani oz. Američani kitajskih korenin. S pomočjo diskurzivne analize izbranih del smo proučili primere napačnega prikazovanja kitajske kulture in ugotavljali razloge zanje. Rezultati analize so osvetlili tri glavne vrste napačnega prikazovanja kitajske kulture v slikanicah: (1) celosten pogled na kitajsko kulturo je zastrt zaradi pretirane pozornosti, namenjene izbranim kulturnim simbolom, kot sta kitajski zmaj in pomladni festival; (2) mešanica prvin različnih azijskih kultur v vizualnem in pisnem jeziku spodbuja edinstvenost kitajske kulture; (3) netočnost informacij zmanjšuje pristnost prikaza kitajske kulture. Opisano prikazovanje je posledica ameriškega odnosa do večkulturnosti in do Američanov kitajskih korenin, privede pa do naslednjih težav: (1) kitajska kultura in kultura Američanov kitajskih korenin sta prikazani kot eno; (2) kitajska kultura je prikazana kot statična, kar povzroča grobo homogenizacijo; (3) izletniški odnos do kitajske kulture privede do pretiranega posvečanja kulturnim simbolom. Proučevane slikanice torej utrjujejo napačne predstave in celo stereotipe o Kitajcih in kitajski kulturi.

Ključne besede: ameriške slikanice, vizualni jezik, multimodalnost, napačno prikazovanje, kitajska kultura

1 INTRODUCTION

The essence of language lies in communication, and language's main function is to convey information. The term language can refer to the spoken and written systems of expression, as well as to "the system of signs, symbols, gestures, etc. for conveying information" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's English Chinese Dictionary*, 1997:833). Signs, symbols and gestures also form a system of language, which could be regarded as a visual language. According to Saussure, any language is composed of "signifier" and "signified", and the 'signifier' of visual symbols is the carrier of visual language expression, which is mainly the image and schema acting on people's visual experience. Its 'signified' is the content of expression and the ideas and thoughts it causes. (Zheng, 2014)

As a unique genre of children's literature, the narrative of picture books is complemented by images (visual language) and text (written language), or images only. David Wiesner's wordless picture book *Tuesday* (1991) is highly regarded and won the Caldecott Medal (an American award for picture books given by the American Library Association) and Japan Picture Book Award in 1992, because it "provides plenty of intriguing visual details to ponder" (Kirkus Media, 2015).

As a multiethnic nation of immigrants, multiculturalism in United States which "respects every culture and is based on cultural pluralism" (Özdemir, 2021), advocates that mainstream society should recognize differences in ethnicity and identity, and ensure that the cultures of ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups are on an equal footing with mainstream culture, which has gradually become the principle and starting point for education, literature and politics. Culture itself is a dynamic, evolving process shaped by social interactions and is often described as a "struggle over meaning" (Hall, 1997). It encompasses various elements, including beliefs, morals, values, language, food, dress, and customs. Picture books, combined with written and visual language, play a crucial role in the production, circulation, and consumption of cultural symbols and practices. Multicultural picture books have become a great medium for intercultural communication, and the authentic representation of other cultures in picture books is extremely important for the target readers to learn about the culture. Chinese culture is interpreted and manifested in a diverse range of ways in picture books. In this paper, picture books by some American authors will be examined for the representation of Chinese culture through written and visual languages.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Picture books are regarded as being of significant importance in the education of young children. Indeed, they are often "the very first book" that children encounter (Salisbury & Styles, 2012). Picture books are utilized extensively in preschool education on a global scale, as they have the capacity to "promote the development of children's cognitive ability, language expression ability, social adaptation ability and emotion" (Wang & Lu, 2017). A study in China found that 104 children demonstrated more advanced school readiness after 18 months of reading picture books (Wang & Shao, 2024). The combination of image with text facilitates the comprehension of the narrative, the understanding of the structural elements of a story, the enhancement of reading comprehension skills, and the development of cultural competence (Elliott, 2024; Akyol, 2021).

Compared to literature for adults, it is widely acknowledged that children's literature has advantages in intercultural communication because it focuses on common topics for children, such as children's innocence, growth, friendship and imagination. Picture books have thus been recognized as valuable tools for promoting intercultural learning and understanding, particularly in educational settings (Mourão, 2023). The

Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s led to demands for recognition and equal rights of ethnic minorities. In the 1970s, multiculturalism became an education policy, which was intended to promote the understanding of the cultural traditions of different national and ethnic groups in primary and secondary education, and multicultural picture books thus emerged to help achieve this, depicting various ethnic, racial, and cultural groups within US society with the aim of helping young readers to celebrate diversity. Research on multicultural picture books has identified the issue of misrepresentation in children's literature, with the portrayal of minority cultures in such books being examined in terms of stereotypes, cultural values, and motifs (Creany, 1993; Wilson, 2014; Husband, 2019; Venessa, 2021). Studies have also examined the representation, authenticity and construction of Chinese culture in picture books (Cheng, 2011; Yu, 2016).

Mingshui Cai surveyed 73 picture books in three local libraries in a small Midwest community in the US in 1993, to learn more about the images of the Chinese and Chinese Americans that they presented. Most of these books were positive about Chinese and Chinese Americans, and "while biased stereotypical portraits have not been eliminated, cultural inauthenticity is the main flaw of many books exhibited in both the content of the texts and the details of the illustrations" (Cai, 1994). A stereotype is "a belief about a group of individuals" (Wheel & Petty, 2001), which can be categorized as positive or negative based on the implications and effects on individuals and society. A positive stereotype refers to a generalized belief that attributes favourable traits to a specific group (Czopp et al., 2015). For example, the idea that "women are more attentive and gentler" seems to be positive of women's characteristics, but it can still be problematic, as it strengthens gender roles, eliminates individual identity and restricts women's career choices. A derogatory generalization about a social group, usually on the basis of prejudice or misinformation (Steele, 1997), can be exemplified by the claim "women are not good at logistic thinking". This kind of negative stereotype will lead to discrimination and the social exclusion of women, as seen in barriers to employment. No matter whether positive or negative, stereotypes contribute to overgeneralized perceptions of social groups.

Following up Mingshui Cai's study, Minjie Chen and Qiuying Wang examined 46 titles of award-winning picture books featuring China and Chinese characters and found "both significant improvements and persistent problems". However, "cultural errors, inaccuracies, and problematic representations still occur at a high frequency, appearing in about one third of the titles" (Chen & Wang, 2010).

A culture can be very broadly defined as how the members of a particular group think, judge, communicate and live. Here, cultural authenticity can be difficult to define, as only the members of the group in question can tell whether something is authentic, and even then their judgements are based on instinct and intuition, rather than objective criteria. However, cultural insiders, those who belong to the culture portrayed, are often better at recognizing authenticity (Cai, 1995). Kathy G. Short and Dana L. Fox (2003:4) follow Bishop and the idea that "you know it when you see it", to support the cultural

insider's judgement. Considering the long tradition of problematic picture books in the US, the author of this paper, as a Chinese cultural insider, wants to examine whether "cultural errors, inaccuracies and problematic representations" still exist in picture books with American authors that consider elements of Chinese culture.

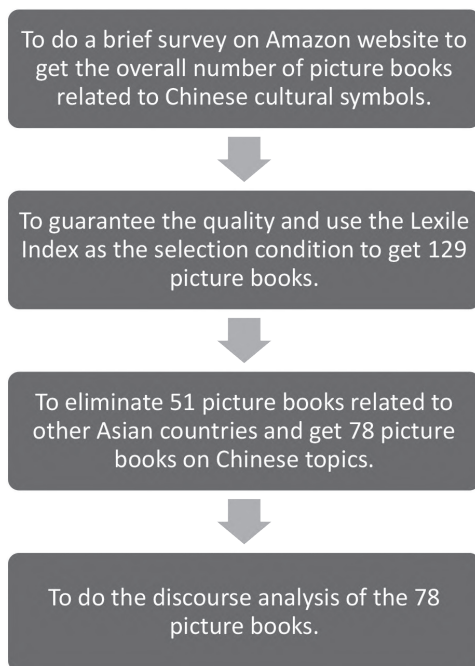
3 METHODOLOGY

Multimodality is a widely used methodology when conducting research on picture books, and is the foundational construction that underpins the theory of communication known as multimodal discourse (2001). Kress and van Leeuwen define multimodality as "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which the modes are combined". A discourse is essentially a "resource" or a "semiotic mode" that is developed in a specific context (e.g. institutional, geographical, social, etc.) by a particular community of social actors (e.g. business practitioners, experts, family members, etc.) to suit that community's specific needs (e.g. to work, act, bond, etc.) (Chiappini, 2014). In picture books, the discourse is developed into a certain visual, verbal, social and cultural context by the writers and illustrators, and it is natural to analyse the discourse of picture books from the semiotic and multimodal perspectives (Moya, 2014; Wang, 2019; Li, 2020; Cheng, 2021).

This study focuses on the misrepresentation of Chinese culture in picture books selected from Amazon, the online retailer that "the monopoly power" when it comes to books, with 79% of e-book market in America (Errera, 2024), and functions as a huge database of published titles. To start the research, the author found there were more than 3, 000 English-language picture books on China and Chinese culture available on Amazon, and a total of 3, 000 of these were used for the initial sample in a quantitative study of the frequency of Chinese cultural symbols.

The next step in the research was to narrow the research scope and focus on the content. The Lexile Framework for Reading is a scientific method of assessing English reading level and text reading difficulty that has been validated by numerous studies (Arrington, 2012; Fisher & Frey, 2013). It is the most widely used reading system in the US, and is applied by institutions in all 50 states, covering about 50% of the student population. The Lexile Index is an important tool for evaluating the quality of picture books, as it ensures age-appropriate readability, supports literacy development, guides book selection, and enhances vocabulary acquisition. To ensure the quality and popularity of the samples, the author chose the Lexile Index as the selection condition, to narrow the research scope to 129 books (including Kindle e-books). The next step is the content and background analysis. The author found that 51 of the titles were related to Asian countries other than China, and that 78 were about Chinese culture and Chinese people. These 78 picture books were thus included in the sample for the discourse analysis.

Table 1: The research process used in this study



4 FINDINGS

Multiculturalism is a complex term in the US. As a multiethnic and multicultural country, there are various minority groups, including African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans in terms of the ethnicity, or the disabled, LGBTQ+, and so on in terms of other characteristics, and such all these groups must be considered in education, politics and other areas of public life. Multiculturalism refers to a social and cultural phenomenon that emphasizes the co-existence and mutual respect of different racial, ethnic and cultural groups in a pluralistic society (Glazer, 1997). Despite the diversity of culture in the US, multiculturalism in this paper is considered rather narrowly in relation to ethnicity alone.

Chinese culture is an important part of American multiculturalism, and is well represented in picture books, which is very significant for Chinese Americans, especially for those born in America, as this can help them to realize their own self-cognition and identity through the aspects of Chinese culture shown in such books. It is also important for other ethnic groups' cognition of Chinese culture. These picture books are a window for the US and even the wider world to get access to Chinese culture, and provide a platform for exchanges and confrontations between different cultures.

The authors and illustrators of the picture books can be categorized into three groups. Firstly, some of the authors and illustrators have not travelled to or resided in China, and have created their stories through imagination or the consumption of the works of others. Secondly, some have visited China but do not have a profound understanding of Chinese culture. Thirdly, there are descendants of Chinese immigrants, who are regarded as insiders in relation to Chinese culture, but do not have a tangible connection to the country.

Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like (1976) is written by Jay Williams and illustrated by Mercer Mayer. It tells the story of a young orphan named Han who works as a gatekeeper in an ancient Chinese city threatened by an enemy army. When an old beggar arrives, claiming to be a dragon who can save the city, the townspeople dismiss him – until Han’s kindness and humility reveals the beggar’s true nature. Although setting with Chinese background, there is no evidence in the available sources indicating that the authors or illustrators had ever travelled to or lived in China. Catherine Stock’s *Emma’s Dragon Hunt* (1984), Hillman & Wallner’s *Min-yo and the Moon Dragon* (1992) also belong to this group.

Kurt Wiese, as a representative of second group, created two picture books, *You Can Write Chinese* (1945) and *Fish in the Air* (1948), for which he won the Caldecott Medal twice. He was also an illustrator for many China-related picture books, including *The Five Chinese Brothers* (1938). He seems to have become an authority on such books and illustrations because he had lived in China for six years, and was believed to have “captured the facial expressions of the Chinese and the atmosphere of the country to an extent that is unusual for a foreigner” (Ewing, 1934). However, the facial expressions of all the characters in his books are identical, emotionless and stereotypical. Based on his own cultural background and experiences, the “foreign” perspective that Kurt Wiese held did not foster any deep understanding of Chinese culture.

Grace Lin is a prominent author and illustrator known for her multicultural books for children, which include picture books, board books and others. As a Chinese American, her books, such as *Bringing in the New Year* (2010) and *Dim Sum for Everyone* (2014), introduce Chinese cultural customs and representations, and demonstrate intercultural communication and integration, as seen, for example, in *The Ugly Vegetables* (2001). However, and though unintentionally, her books have reinforced the stereotype that “all Asians look alike” (Interview with Cybils, 2016).

There are other forms of misrepresentation of Chinese culture in picture books, aside from the stereotypical portraits of Chinese people, as outlined in the following sections.

4.1 An Excessive Focus on Cultural Symbols

Omar Lizardo defined “cultural symbols as motivated mappings between external form and cognitive meaning, used for both the private evocation of and the public externalization of those meanings” (Lizardo, 2016). Cultural symbols are part of the unconscious world of the members of a culture, and also the first and automatic choice of references

when outsiders come to learn about it. Chinese cultural symbols can be divided into six categories (Guan, 2015):

Table 2: The six categories of Chinese cultural symbols (Guan, 2015)

Culture symbols	}	symbolic symbol: The Great Wall, dragon, panda, etc.
		life symbol: Spring Festival, Kungfu, Chinese cuisine, silk, etc.
		thought symbol: Confucianism, Taoism, etc.
		language and literature symbol: Chinese language, poetry, etc.
		art symbol: calligraphy, painting, opera, etc.
		education symbol: Peking University, etc.

Here, the symbolic symbols refer to the typical icons related to Chinese culture, which would arouse subconscious connections between the symbol and the culture, like the panda and Great Wall, which are both icons of China. Life symbols are related to the way people live, such as how they eat, dress and celebrate. Thought symbols reveal the traditional beliefs and spiritual practices, while language and literature symbols represent the communication system and mental outlook of the Chinese. Art symbols are the visualization of the Chinese aesthetic consciousness, and the education symbols include the typical characteristic and outstanding achievements of the Chinese education system. The conformity between symbolic symbols and life symbols is the most superficial and obvious element that attracts attention in intercultural communication.

In this study, among the initial 3, 000 sample picture books on Chinese culture on the Amazon website, the number of books that feature typical Chinese cultural symbols, such as the Spring Festival and the dragon, far outnumber other themes.

Table 3: The Chinese cultural symbols in the relevant books on the Amazon website

Chinese Culture Symbol	The Number of Picture Books
Dragon	726
Chinese Language (in bilingual books)	692
Spring Festival	426
Food	138
Panda	32
Palace	30
Emperor	27
Great Wall	20
Taichi	5
Kungfu	2

A research team of Peking University conducted surveys in 2011, and again in 2016, to find that Americans' appreciation of Chinese cultural symbols, such as the panda, the Great Wall, the Chinese language, and Taichi, has increased significantly, with the Spring Festival showing the greatest growth, increasing by 50.3% (Guan, 2018). It shows that in intercultural communication, individuals often comprehend and adapt to new cultural contexts through tangible, observable elements. In contrast, abstract concepts or educational symbols may necessitate a more profound cultural comprehension to fully grasp. Symbolic and life symbols represent intuitive and frequently encountered dimensions of cultural differences, making them the most readily observable aspects.

The focus of this study is picture books, and Table 3 also confirms Guan's finding. When looking at Table 3, the question arises as to why the top symbols are so popular? The Chinese-English bilingual picture books are good materials for children of immigrants to study Chinese, and books about Chinese traditions can provide answers to the many questions about daily life they may have. In short, these books are carriers of the Chinese cultural inheritance, which can strength the relationships of in-groups. These symbols are often used as cultural identifiers to quickly convey a Chinese cultural identity, and can help individuals quickly identify both in- and out-groups.

4.2 Localization of Culture Symbols

The localization and adaptation of Chinese cultural symbols is another common phenomenon in the books examined here. The localization of symbols refers to the process of adapting symbols (e.g., language, images, gestures, colours, or rituals) from one cultural context to another, ensuring they align with the target culture's values, norms, and cognitive frameworks while retaining their intended meaning or function. It involves modifying both the signifier and the signified of symbols to avoid misinterpretation, cultural offense, or loss of communicative efficacy. Replacing original symbols with functionally equivalent ones is an important strategy for localization. For example, there is a huge difference between the dragons in Chinese and Western culture. The Chinese dragon represents good fortune, happiness and authority, while the Western dragon is synonymous with evil, greed and disaster. It is thus perhaps not surprising that the signifier of the dragon differed in the selected books, too.

4.2.1 The Localization of the Chinese Dragon

The dragon is an important creature in various mythological traditions. In traditional Chinese culture, it is seen as a guardian of water and a symbol of power. In contrast, in Japanese culture, dragons are often depicted as snake-like creatures, representing destruction. In the Western European tradition, dragons are often portrayed as evil and greedy creatures, typically guarding treasure (Sonja, 2024). Due to the influence of differing cultural

identities, Chinese and Western conceptions of the dragon frequently evoke divergent emotional responses and symbolic interpretations, thus engendering obstacles to effective intercultural communication.

Emma's Dragon Hunt, for example, is a story about Emma and her grandfather, who has just arrived from China. Her grandfather explains how dragons were responsible for earthquakes, heat waves, solar eclipses, and thunderstorms. The dragon is typically depicted as blue and spotted, emerging from the ground (Figure 1), in *Min-Yo and the Moon Dragon* (1992), it has orange wings (Figure 2), both of which are rarely found in Chinese culture. In Chinese culture, the dragon is a creature that lives in the deep sea and can fly due to an ability to control the clouds, rather than having wings, and the whole body is covered in scales (Figure 3). It is important to note that in Chinese culture there is no known association between dragons and earthquakes. According to Chinese legend, the land was supported by four turtles, akin to the four legs of a table. These turtles had been hibernating and still for hundreds of years. They would move when they awoke, and then earthquakes would occur.

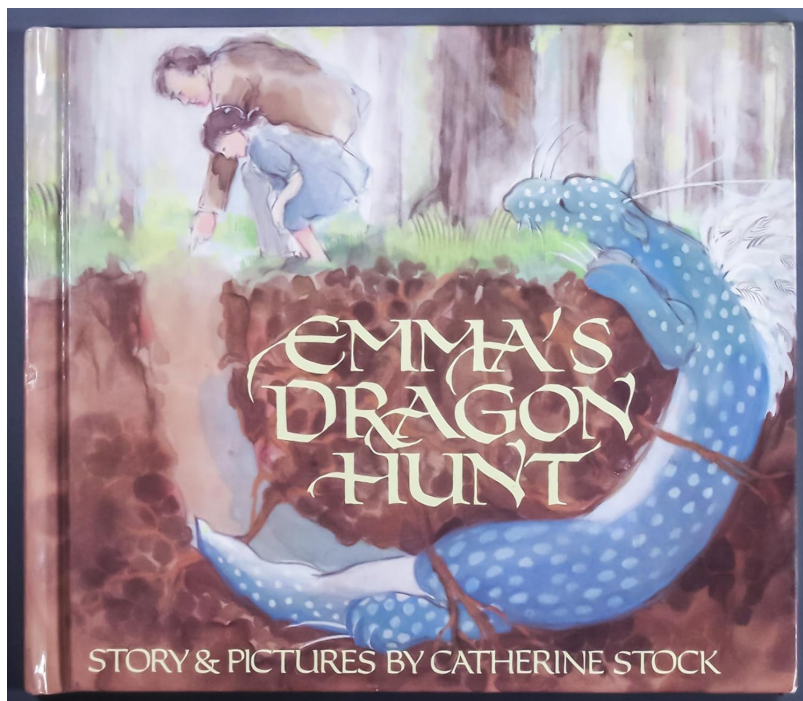


Figure 1: The dragon image in *Emma's Dragon Hunt* by Catherine Stock (1984)

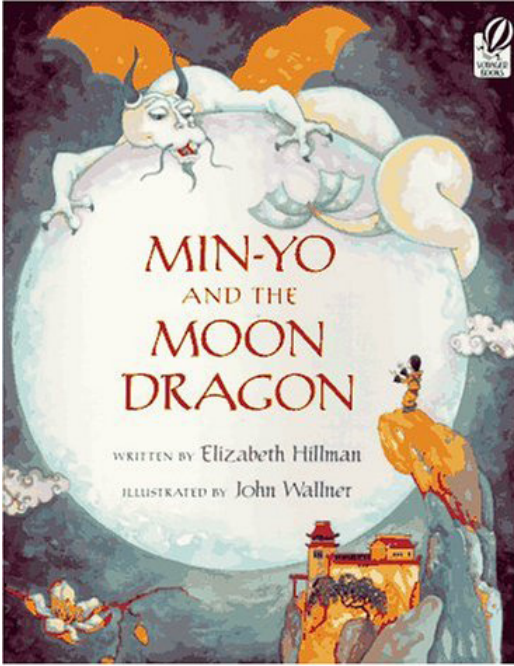
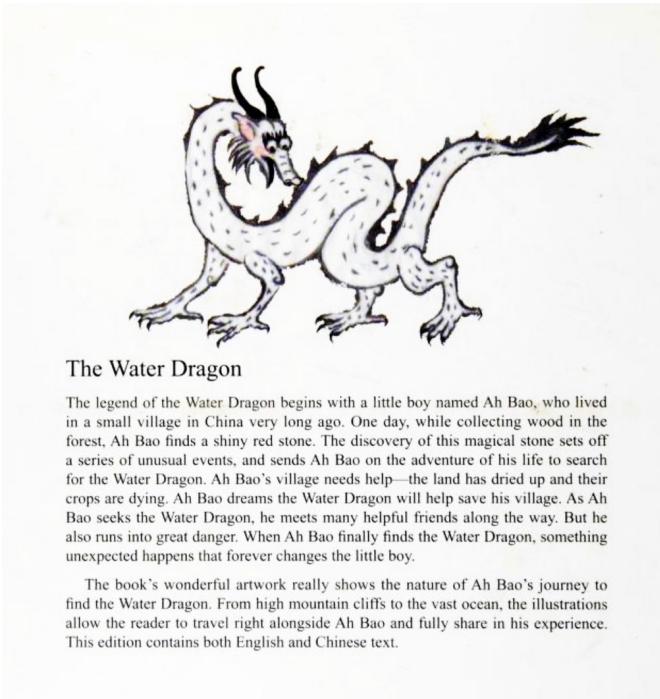


Figure 2: The dragon image in *Min-yo and the Moon Dragon* (1992) by Elizabeth Hillman, illustrated by John C. Wallner



The Water Dragon

The legend of the Water Dragon begins with a little boy named Ah Bao, who lived in a small village in China very long ago. One day, while collecting wood in the forest, Ah Bao finds a shiny red stone. The discovery of this magical stone sets off a series of unusual events, and sends Ah Bao on the adventure of his life to search for the Water Dragon. Ah Bao's village needs help—the land has dried up and their crops are dying. Ah Bao dreams the Water Dragon will help save his village. As Ah Bao seeks the Water Dragon, he meets many helpful friends along the way. But he also runs into great danger. When Ah Bao finally finds the Water Dragon, something unexpected happens that forever changes the little boy.

The book's wonderful artwork really shows the nature of Ah Bao's journey to find the Water Dragon. From high mountain cliffs to the vast ocean, the illustrations allow the reader to travel right alongside Ah Bao and fully share in his experience. This edition contains both English and Chinese text.

Figure 3: The whole body of a dragon in *Water Dragon* (2012) by Li Jian

In *Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like*, the facial expressions of the dragon are the typical greedy and evil expressions of Western dragons (Figure 4). In contrast, the traditional Chinese dragon's look is calm, serene and solemn in a picture book by a Chinese author (Figure 5). These western dragon images are very different from the Chinese dragon image.

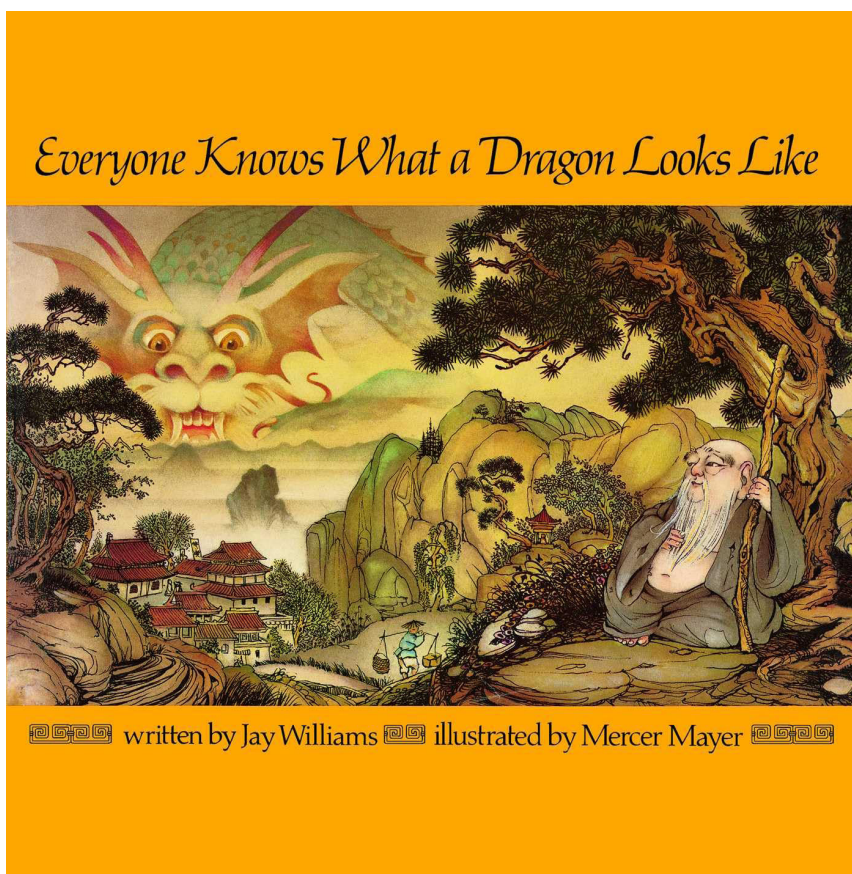


Figure 4: The dragon face in *Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like* (1984) by Jay Williams and Mercer Mayer

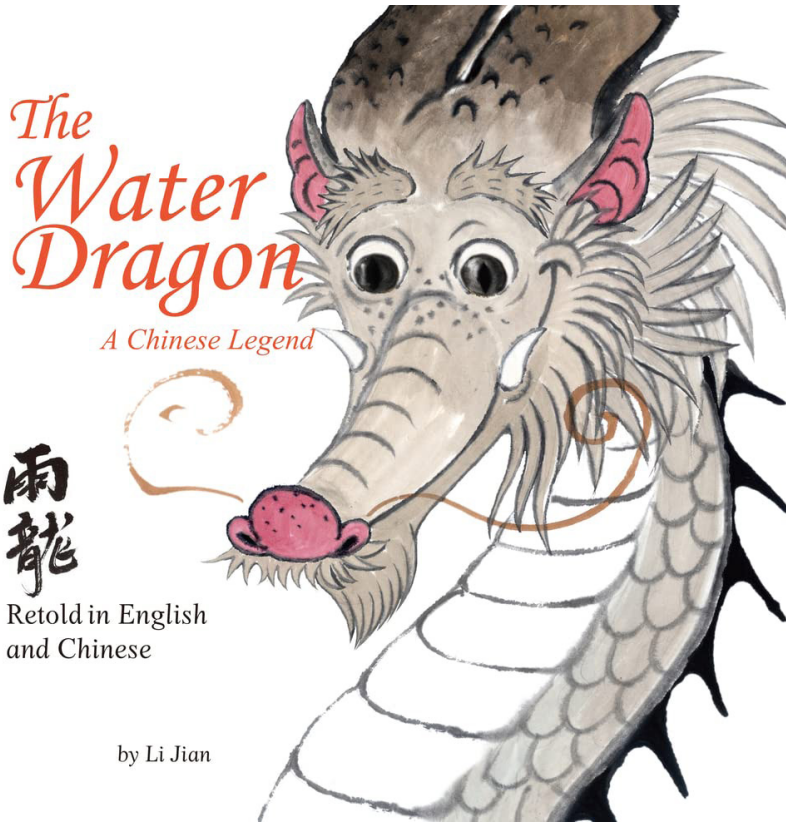


Figure 5: The dragon face and whole image in *Water Dragon* (2012) by Li Jian

4.2.2 The Localization of the Chinese Palace

In *The Weaving of a Dream*, the palace (Figure 6) is built on the steep cliff that reaches the clouds, which is a typical palace design in Western magical depictions. However, the ancient Chinese palaces are usually located in the central empty flat land of the imperial city, covering a vast area, like the Forbidden City in Figure 7. An ancient Chinese city usually contains the outer city, the inner city and the imperial city (palace). Not only is the imperial palace symmetrical, but also the whole city is, as this is an expression of Chinese traditional philosophy and aesthetics. For example, the “Beijing Central Axis” was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2024 (Chen, 2024).

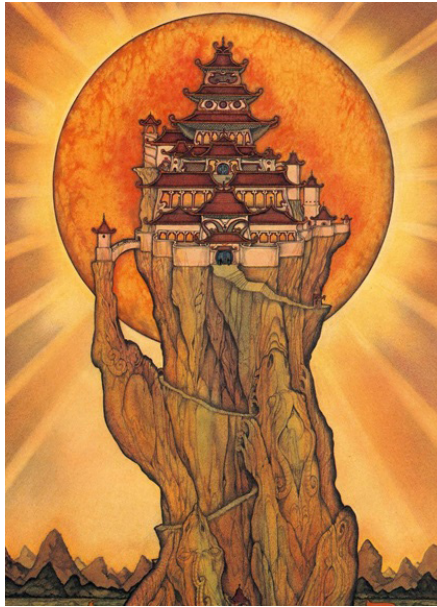


Figure 6: *The palace in The Weaving of a Dream (1989) by Marilee Heye*

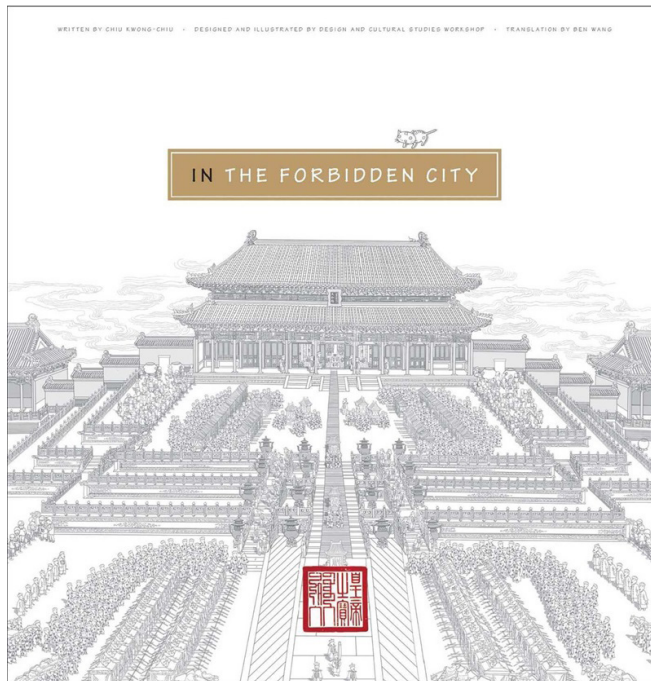


Figure 7: *The Chinese palace in In the Forbidden City (2014) by Chiu Kwong-chiu*

No matter whether in China or the West, the dragon is an imaginary mythological creature, and the differences in how they are portrayed reflect the differences between the two cultures' traditions, beliefs and religions. In contrast, palaces are real, and the differences in how they are shown reflect the difference in the aesthetic concepts of China and the West, with an axisymmetric design typical in China.

4.2.3 The Localization of the Written Language

In addition to the localization of the visual language, we also get some examples of the written language and plot setting.

“Mulan fed Little Brother, who barked in appreciation. “

– from *Disney Before the Story: Mulan's Secret Plan* (2020) by Tessa Roehl

In American culture, dogs are regarded as members of the family, and “Little Brother” is thus an acceptable name for a dog for American readers. However, in ancient China, dogs are generally used to guard the home, and their cultural connotations are mostly derogatory. While it is true that dogs are widely recognized as a helpful, companionable and friendly, in Chinese culture there are several derogatory terms derived from the dog's loyalty to its owner. Indeed, the term “dog” has been extended to mean a person who runs for his master, or works without thought as an accomplice (Meng, 2022).

Although attitudes towards dogs have changed dramatically in modern China, where they are mostly pets, the term “Little Brother” would still be inappropriate to Chinese readers, and might be misinterpreted as a familial reference rather than a pet's name.

According to the theory of multimodality, discourse develops based on the context, and the aim is to please the specific group it is aimed at. The localization of the visual image of the dragon and palace, and the name of the dog, show that in these examples the purpose is to adopt to American readers' culture and meet the readers' expectations. In intercultural communication, blindly catering to readers and complete localization are not conducive to the cultivation of the intercultural consciousness of young readers. Featherstone (2012) explored the dynamic interplay between globalization and cultural localization, and argued that global forces should interact with local identities, practices, and symbolic systems. Because of the over-localization of Chinese cultural symbols, American readers found the picture books to be over-Americanized. Excessive and superficial localization without appropriate cultural connotations will lead to the loss of the uniqueness of the original symbols, and thus cultural homogenization.

4.3 The Confusion of Asian Cultures

Because of the widespread and traditional influence of Chinese written characters, Confucianism, Buddhism, and political affiliation, many Asian cultures were historically

influenced by Chinese Han ethnic culture, and thus this area is known as the Sinosphere. This term is used to denote the region comprising multiple countries in East and South-east Asia that have historically been significantly influenced by Chinese culture, and includes the countries of China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, and so on (Fogel, 2009; Denecke & Nguyen, 2017). However, despite this influence all these countries' also have their own distinct cultural characteristics.

Moreover, Asian Americans can also be seen as a distinct cultural group. In 1968, students at the University of California, Berkeley, founded the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) to fight for educational equity and end discrimination, and this was the first time the term "Asian American" was used to unite people from with various East Asian backgrounds. This concept broke through ethnic boundaries and marked the politicization of Asian American identity. Since then, Asian Americans have been categorized as a specific racial grouping in the US census and other settings.

With the support of a multicultural policy for ethnic minorities in America, public education is committed to recognizing cultural diversity and fostering it. However, different Asian countries' cultures are often confused and mixed together by the creators of picture books.

Tiki Tiki Tembo by Arlene Mosel is a classic American picture book and was the winner of the 1968 Boston Globe – Horn Book Award for Picture Books. In 1997, *The New York Times* named *Tikki Tikki Tembo* one of the 50 best children's books of the previous 50 years. It is a good example to be analysed from the perspective of multimodality, as the discourse contains verbal communication, architectural design, and dress codes, and is also a good example of the confusion of Asian cultures.

The story tried to jokingly explain the evolution of the length of Chinese names by telling of a boy called "Tikki tikki tembo-no sa rembo-chari bari ruche-pip peri pembo" who got into trouble because of his long name. Readers were told it was a traditional Chinese folk tale, but it has been shown that in fact the story comes from the Japanese folk tale "Jugemu" (Book Analysis, n.d.). From ancient times to modern China, Chinese people's names are composed of the family name and given name. The family name is usually one character, like Fang, Li, Liu, Wang, or Zhang, and the given name consists of one or two Chinese characters, which carries the blessings and expectation of parents. For example, Mao Zedong, the founder of People's Republic of China, is a typical Chinese name. It is thus clear that "Tikki tikki tembo-no sa rembo-chari bari ruche-pip peri pembo" is far too long to be a real Chinese name. Moreover, the architectural and clothing in the book are not Chinese, either.

The Empty Pot by Demi is a classic picture book about honesty and bravery, which has been presented as an ancient Chinese folktale. But in fact, it is a Korean folk tale that is used as an example of Korean literature in first grade textbooks in China (Yu, 2016).

In fact, the confusion of Chinese with other Asian cultures is not a unique phenomenon in American picture books, and inaccurate representations of Korean cultural elements have also been noted (Kwak, 2014).

The cultural conflation of Asian countries is common among readers, authors and illustrators. A total of 129 picture books were selected for further research from the initial population of 3, 000, using the Lexile Index as the quality and popularity criteria. A closer examination then showed that 51 of the 129 picture books on “Chinese” topics were not related to Chinese culture or Chinese people. The contents and cultural backgrounds of those 51 books included stories about India (11 books), Japan (13 books), Korea (6 books), Indonesia (4 books) and other Asian countries, distributed as follows:

Table 4: The country distribution of 129 picture books on “Chinese” topics

Country	The Number of Relevant Picture Books
China	78
Japan	13
India	11
North and South Korea	6
Indonesia	4
Malaysia	1
Philippines	1
Afghanistan	1
Cambodia	1
Thailand	1
Turkey	1
Unidentified	11
Total	129

4.4 Information Disorder

Folklore constitutes the original material of children’s literature. In its earliest forms, children’s literature was primarily a direct adaptation of folklore, serving as a literalization of oral narratives. A notable example of this phenomenon is the work of the Brothers Grimm in the 18th century, who meticulously collected and compiled German folk tales, resulting in the compilation of *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*. Folklore and legends provide a rich source of material for writers to draw on, but the inclusion of a large number of folklores and legends in picture books has the potential to compromise the authenticity of the history, culture and reality of the situation depicted. Meanwhile, China’s long history and changing historical dynasties bring great difficulties to creators with an English-language cultural background, and the confusion of historical dynasties is thus a common problem.

In *The Weaving of a Dream*, the clothes and hairstyles of the women on the cover (Figure 8) are of the typical Tang Dynasty style (681–907 AD), while the people’s and officials’ clothing (Figure 9) is of the typical style of Qing Dynasty (1636–1912 AD), as can clearly be seen in the men’s iconic pigtail, or queue.

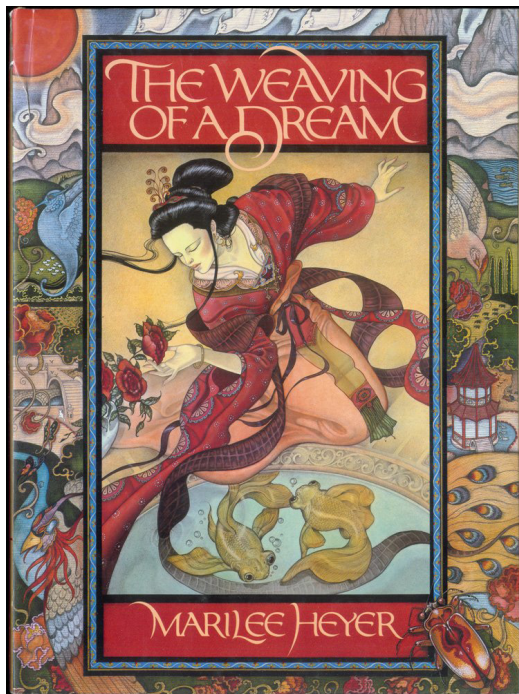


Figure 8: The cover of *The Weaving of a Dream*(1989) by Marilee Heye



Figure 9: Image from *The Weaving of a Dream* (1989) by Marilee Heye

Cultural confusion over Chinese education can be found in *Disney Before the Story: Mulan's Secret Plan* (2020) by Tessa Roehl. Here are two examples:

Would she learn math today? Writing? (p.2)

“I told you, Mulan. It’s a different kind of school,” said her mother. (p.10)

The story of Mulan joining the army comes from the famous Chinese text *The Poem of Mulan*, written during the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589 AD). In ancient China, women did not have the right to receive education. Moreover, in ancient China education followed Confucianism, and the content was dominated by Confucian texts, without the division into subjects such as mathematics and writing, as in modern society.

5 DISCUSSION

The great number of picture books on Chinese culture that are available on Amazon is attributed to the policy of multiculturalism which emerged under pressure from various ethnic minorities in the US, who campaigned for equal rights and an end to discrimination. However, over time there has been a tendency for multiculturalism to become rather “rigid” and so stereotype the national cultures of various ethnic minorities, as seen in the various misrepresentations of Chinese culture in American picture books. Although criticized for its racist illustrations, as noted by Schwartz in “*The Five Chinese Brothers: Time to Retire*” in 1977, *The Five Chinese Brothers* has been reprinted many times and is still available on Amazon. Moreover, when it was used in a university classroom many undergraduates did not see anything wrong with it (McNair, 2003). The reasons why students and even adult readers in USA did not perceive any issues with this book lie in the following aspects:

5.1 Chinese Culture Is Equated with Chinese American Culture

Culture is the product of human social practice, and is closely linked with the development of society. With the implementation of a policy of multiculturalism and the abolition of discrimination and restrictions on Asian immigration in the 1965 Immigration Law, a large number of immigrants from Asian countries went to the US, which changed the population structure. With the increase in Chinese immigrants, more readers and writers took an interest in Chinese culture. With the change in the social status of Chinese people in America, the focus of the related picture books also shifted from legends and folktales to the personal development and achievements of Chinese immigrants. The images of Chinese people in picture books are now no longer of labours with long pigtailed, but instead of scientists, pianists, and fashion designers. As mentioned above, the main themes of the 78 books examined in this study were myths and legends, Spring Festival

activities and immigrant stories. Thirty-two books, nearly 40% of the total, are about the new generation of Chinese Americans, examining the psychological processes related to integration and identity, as well personal achievements.

Chinese culture is bound to develop with different characteristics in the US and China. As Professor Xu Yingguo, an expert in Chinese American culture, has noted (2005):

When individuals inhabit a different cultural environment, they tend to adapt the original culture to the new setting, thereby resulting in a third culture that differs from both the source cultures. This process of adaptation and transformation is more about adapting to a new environment than about copying the original culture. The Chinese culture that ethnic Chinese refer to in the U.S. context is actually Chinese American culture, not Chinese culture as we know it, and the differences between the two are taken for granted. There is a widely quoted saying by Maxine Hong Kingston (a Chinese American author), 'I am an Chinese-American, not an American Chinese, and my emphasis is on America. My writing focuses on America rather than China'. In the American context, Chinese-Americans practice Chinese culture differently and sometimes even in the opposite direction.

Chinese American culture, as a "third culture", is different from both Chinese and American cultures. The reason is that Chinese Americans are characterized by a fluidity between the labels of "Chinese" and "American", influenced by factors such as class, gender, and generational dimensions, and thus Chinese American may adapt their identities when they are in different social environments. In 2020 there were 5.54 million Chinese Americans (UCA data centre, n.d.). Many Chinese Americans are struggling with an identity that is made up of two parts: Chinese and American. Moreover, the huge differences between Chinese and American cultures make it more challenging for Chinese people to adapt to American society. Stuart Hall (1990) explained that "identity is a continuous 'production', which is never complete, static, but always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation of new cultural practices". Identity is not fixed, but it is created and changed through interaction with society, and while fluidity is always a characteristic of identity, this is especially true for minority groups.

This cultural fusion is not merely a simple mixing of cultures, but rather is the birth of a new cultural form that retains the core values of Chinese culture while also absorbing unique elements of American culture. For instance, dishes served in Chinese restaurants in the US represent a blend of Chinese and American cooking styles and ingredients, resulting in a unique fusion that is neither traditionally Chinese nor authentically American. Chinese American culture is the result of the Chinese community adapting to American society and enriching and contributing to American cultural diversity. It introduces new perspectives and cultural resources to American society, thereby promoting exchanges and understanding

between different cultures. *Apple Pie 4th of July* (2006) by Janet S. Wong tells a story of a young Chinese American girl whose parents run a Chinese restaurant. On July 4th, the Independence Day, her parents still work and cook Chinese food in their restaurant, but the girl wants to enjoy the holiday as other American citizens, and she thinks no one would want to eat Chinese food on that day. Ultimately though, it is the customer's appreciation of the food that bring the girl both a sense of holiday cheer and cultural acceptance.

Based on the historical background of multiculturalism, the reason why the US and other immigrant countries adopt multicultural policies is to alleviate social contradictions and recognize the cultural differences and equality of ethnic minorities, but not to unconditionally protect the integrity of a specific culture. As a political strategy, multiculturalism explores identity cognition under the framework of mainstream culture, with the ultimate goal of helping new immigrants to realize citizenship identification and identify with a national consciousness in the context of cultural conflicts. American multicultural education is thus committed to national identity education under the recognition of cultural differences. It there natural for most Americans them to equate the culture of Chinese Americans with Chinese culture.

5.2 Chinese Culture Is Regarded as a Static Concept

Chinese civilization has a history of over 5, 000 years, and Chinese culture is constantly evolving in line with economic development, changes in social systems, technological advances, and so on. Mingshui Cai (1994), a Chinese American scholar at the University of Northern Iowa, conducted a survey of 73 picture books about Chinese culture and Chinese people in local libraries, and found that 51 of them, or 70%, were based on folk stories and legends. This prevalence of similar themes on ancient Chinese myths and folklore in picture books reflected the static state of Chinese culture in the US in the 1990s. Myths and folklore provide much space for the imagination, which is why they are popular themes in literature, especially children's literature. However, although the imagination is a powerful tool in literature, it cannot fully replace the need to experience and understand a real culture. Ethnicity and personal experience are extremely important in creating authentic multicultural literature (Cai, 1995). Writers must thus be careful and strive to avoid misrepresentations when writing about cultures other than their own. Many authors and illustrators have no direct experience of Chinese culture, and their comprehension of it comes from literature and other such representations. A typical example is *The Five Chinese Brothers* (1938) by Claire Huchet Bishop and Kurt Wiese (Figure 10), which has been noted for the racial stereotypes of Chinese people it contains (McNair, 2003). Claire Huchet Bishop (1899-1993), the author of the book, was a Swiss-born children's author and librarian who lived and worked in France and the US, with no known personal experience of living or working in China. She wrote about 30 children's books, which were characterized as "fantastic or whimsical" (Scarboro Missions, n.d.).

As noted above, this particular book is full of controversy, as it has been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes and racial insensitivity in its illustrations and themes. The Chinese people are illustrated as labourers with long pigtails, as in *Fish in the Air* (1948), another book that was illustrated by Kurt Wiese.

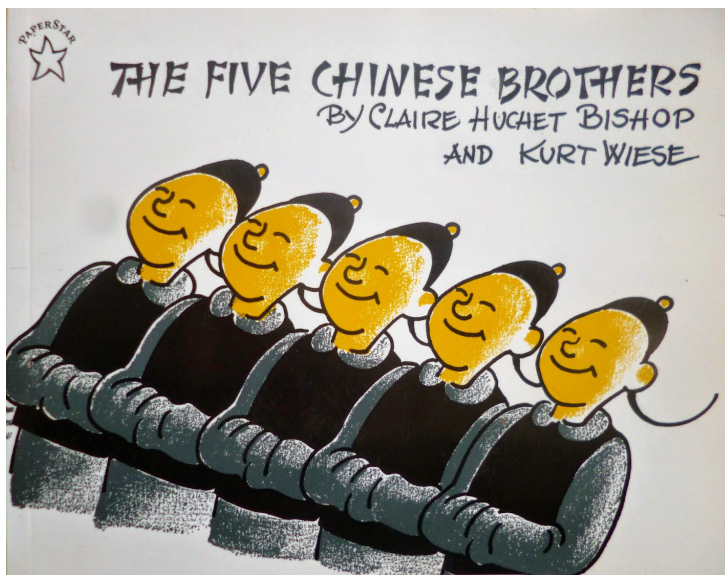


Figure 10: The cover of *The Five Chinese Brothers* (1938) by Claire H. Bishop and Kurt Wiese

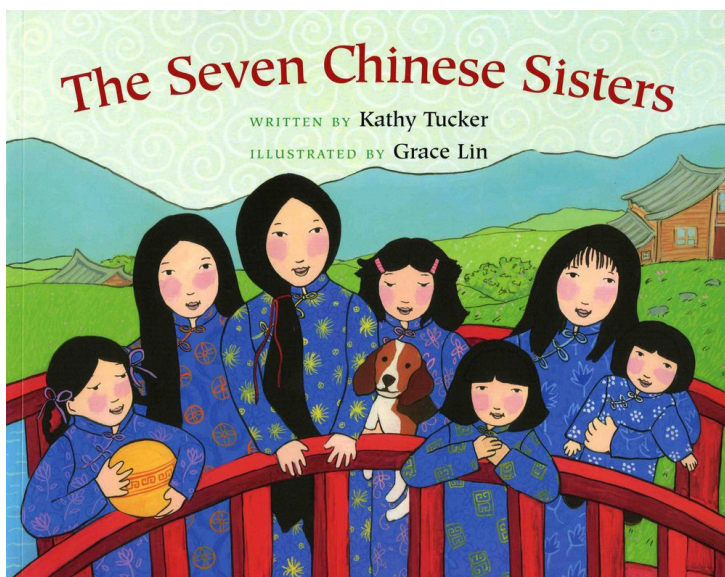


Figure 11: The cover of *The Seven Chinese Sisters* (2003) by Kathy Tucker and Grace Lin

On the one hand, scholars like Schwartz (1977) have noted the stereotypes in this called and called for it to be retired from circulation. On the other hand, the book remains very popular among readers. *The Five Chinese Brothers* was first published by Putnam Juvenile in 1938, and was reprinted 46 times, being reissued by Puffin Books in 1996 and Paw Prints in 2009 (Douban, n.d.). The author of the book did not have any real experience of China or Chinese culture, but the “fantastic or whimsical” story has long been appealing to American readers. The book’s popularity highlights how stories that rely on stereotypes or simplified cultural elements can still be attractive to audiences who are unfamiliar with the culture being depicted. This suggests that, in the absence of authentic cultural experiences, readers may be more drawn to stories that fit their preconceived notions or fantasies about a culture, rather than the reality.

The book has also had long-lasting impact on later creative works, with a series of similar picture books such as *Fish in the Air* (1948), *The Seven Chinese Brothers* (1990), *Seven Magic Brothers* (1994), and *The Seven Chinese Sisters* (2003). From *The Five Chinese Brothers* (1938) to *The Seven Chinese Sisters* (2003) (Figure 11), the image of the Chinese characters remains much the same, without any personality or unique characteristics. Apart from gender, the stereotypes of Chinese people have really not changed in the span of more than six decades. Therefore, the stereotypes of Chinese and Chinese culture are bound to be reinforced and passed on to future generations.

5.3 A Sight-Seeing Attitude Towards Chinese Culture

The multicultural policy of the US ensures that ethnic minorities such as the Chinese can express and pass on their ethnicity and culture, and picture books are a good channel to deepen the communication between Chinese culture and readers of different cultures. However, while the US advocates multiculturalism, when it comes to the cultures of ethnic minorities, mainstream readers tend to have a “sight-seeing attitude” and pay more attention to cultural symbols such as festivals and celebrations, engaging with the culture in a way that is similar to how tourists experience a new place. Tourists often focus on the most visible and easily accessible aspects of a culture, such as landmarks, famous sites, or popular events. Cultural symbols such as festivals and celebrations are often the most visible and accessible parts of a culture. Moreover, they are usually designed to be inclusive and entertaining, making them easier for outsiders to appreciate. As mentioned above, the cultural symbols in the books examined in this study could be put into six categories, and mainly related to symbolic symbols, life symbols and language symbols, with these being the most distinctive and apparent in intercultural communication.

Hofstede’s (1980) cultural onion model is a theoretical model that graphically describes the structure of a culture. It compares a culture to an onion, which has different layers from the outside to the inside. The outermost layer of this cultural onion is symbols, which are the most obvious and easily observed part of a culture. The progression

from the outer layer of symbols, rituals, and other elements to core values reflects the transition of culture from a surface phenomena to its deeper essence.

Excessive focus on the superficial symbols can lead to stereotypes. Cultural symbols are characterized by their metaphorical and metonymic nature, and are easily simplified and misunderstood in the communication process. For example, the excessive focus on the dragon and Spring Festival in picture books makes American readers acquire stereotypes of Chinese culture. On the one hand, these books may create a sense of oriental mystery with all kinds of ancient myths. On the other hand, American readers may think that Chinese culture is essentially just celebrating the Spring Festival, setting off firecrackers and eating dumplings. Overemphasizing certain cultural symbols, such as dragons, may also lead to an incomplete understanding of the cultural connotations of such symbols. Without full consideration of their complexity and diversity, the excessive focus on certain culture symbols will lead to the formation of stereotypes.

6 CONCLUSION

This study analyses the misrepresentations and stereotypes of the written and visual language of Chinese culture in American picture books, and also examines how the formation of stereotypes in the context of multiculturalism in the US is closely related to socio-historical factors. While multiculturalism emphasizes cultural diversity, in practice certain cultural groups may be marginalized or simplified, leading to the creation of stereotypes. However, due to the limited number of samples analysed in this research, it is inevitable that some issues still need to be discussed further. Future studies may thus consider expanding the range of samples examined, analysing the way culture is presented in different types of picture books in more detail, and exploring how to promote a more authentic and diverse cultural understanding in intercultural communication.

REFERENCES

- Akyol, T. (2021). A journey to the values with picture books: A research on the value acquisition of young children. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 8(3), 1678–1691. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1308192.pdf>
- Arrington, M. (2012). Teaching Students to Use Lexiles. *School Library Monthly*, 29(1), 37–38.
- Book Analysis. (n.d.). *Tiki tiki tembo, Learning Alley: Together it's possible*. https://www.learningally.org/Portals/6/Docs/TeacherResources/LA_Analysis_TikkiTikiTembo.pdf

- Cai, M. (1994). Images in Chinese and Chinese Americans in Picture Books. *Children's Literature Education*, 3, 169–190.
- Cai, M. (1995). Can We Fly across Cultural Gaps on the Wings of Imagination? Ethnicity, Experience, and Cultural Authenticity. *New Advocate*, 8, 1–16.
- Chen M., & Wang Q. (2010). China and Chinese as Mirrored in Multicultural Youth Literature: A Study of Award-Winning Picture Books from 1993 to 2009. In X. Chen et al. (eds.), *Reading Development and Difficulties in Monolingual and Bilingual Chinese Children* (pp. 231–252). Springer.
- Chen, R. (2024, July 27). *Beijing's Central Axis Becomes a World Heritage Site: 12 Years in the Making: Honor the symmetry as the Most Precious*. Pengpai news. https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_28211190
- Cheng, D. (2011). *A study of the construction of cultural authenticity in children's picture books portraying Chinese people and Chinese culture* [Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University].
- Cheng, N. (2021). Research on Metafictional Narrative Method in Picture Books for Contemporary Children. *Journal of Northeast Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 1, 72–80.
- Chiappini, F., Nickerson C., & Planken B. (2014). *Business Discourse* (2nd ed.). Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Creany, A. D. (1993). *Representation of Culture in Children's Picture Books*. Clarion University. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED370570.pdf>
- Cybils. (2016, April). *Interview with Grace Lin*. <https://www.cybils.com/2016/04/interview-with-grace-lin.html>
- Czopp, A. M., Kay, A. C., & Cheryan, S. (2015). Positive stereotypes are pervasive and powerful. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(4), 451–463. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691615588091>
- Denecke, W., & Nguyen, N. (2017). “Shared Literary Heritage in the East Asian Sino-graphic Sphere”. In W. Denecke, W. Li, & X. Tian (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature* (pp. 510–532).
- Douban. (n.d.). <https://book.douban.com/subject/30295923/>
- Elliott, E. (2024, August 14). The power of picture books: Benefits and why they're important for early education. *Worldreader*. <https://www.worldreader.org/now/the-power-of-picture-books-benefits-and-why-theyre-important-for-early-education/>
- Errera, R. (2024, December 11). Printed books vs eBooks statistics, trends and facts [2025]. *Toner Buzz*. <https://www.tonerbuzz.com/blog/paper-books-vs-ebooks-statistics/>
- Ewing, M. (1934). China in Children's Books. *The Elementary English Review*, 11(8), 203–226.
- Featherstone, M. (2012). Global and local cultures 1. In *Mapping the futures* (pp. 169–187). Routledge.

- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2013). Growing Your Garden of Complex Texts. *Educational Leadership*, 70(9), 50–53.
- Fogel, J. A. (2009). *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese relations in space and time*. Harvard University Press.
- Fox, D., & Short, K. (2003). *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature*. National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL.
- Glazer, N. (1997). *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*. Harvard University Press.
- Guan, S. (2015). On the Evaluation System of Chinese Culture's International Influence. *International Communication*, 1, 45–48.
- Guan, S. (2018). American People's Fondness for Chinese Cultural Symbols Increased Significantly in the Past Five Years – One of the Questionnaires on the International Influence of Chinese Culture. *International Communication*, 2, 40–43.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Sage.
- Husband, T. (2019). Using multicultural picture books to promote racial justice in urban early childhood literacy classrooms. *Urban Education*, 54(8), 1058–1084.
- Kirkus Reviews. (2015, May 17). "Tuesday." Kirkus Media LLC. www.kirkusreviews.com
- Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. Oxford University Press Inc.
- Kwak, Y., Hyun, E., Kwon, Y., & Lee, S. (2014). The Image of Korean-American Child and Culture Reflected in the Multicultural Picture Books Published in the USA. *Journal of Children's Literature and Education*, 3, 25–44.
- Li, X. (2020). A Study of Children's Literature Translation from the Perspective of Imagology. *Foreign Languages Research*, 5, 84–88.
- Liu, B., Zhou, J., Li, L., & Gao, X. (2011). Do Words Convey Key Information for Young Children During Their Independent Picturebook Reading? A Comparative Study of Young Children's Eye Movement over Words and Main Characters. *Chinese Journal of Special Education*, 1, 80–86.
- Lizardo, O. (2016). Cultural symbols and cultural power. *Qualitative Sociology*, 39, 199–204.
- McNair, J. C. (2003). "But The Five Chinese Brothers Is One of My Favorite Books!": Conducting sociopolitical critiques of children's literature with preservice teachers. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 29(1), 46–54.
- Meng, X. (2022). *A comparative study of the cultural meanings of Chinese and Arabic animal words for teaching Chinese as a foreign language* [Doctoral dissertation, Shandong Normal University].

- Mourão, S. (2023). Picture books for intercultural learning in foreign language education: A scoping review. *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*, 28(1), 173–209. <https://doi.org/10.48694/zif.3620>
- Moya Guijarro, A. J. (2014). *A multimodal analysis of picture books for children: A systemic functional approach*. Equinox.
- Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary* (4th ed.). (1997). The Commercial Press & Oxford University Press.
- Özdemir, E. (2021). Multiculturalism and America. *Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 35, 112–125. <https://doi.org/10.31123/akil.886539>
- Salisbury, M., & Styles, M. (2012). *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Storytelling*. Quercus Publishing.
- Scarboro Missions. (n.d.). *Claire Huchet Bishop (1899-1993)*. <https://www.scarboromissions.ca/interfaith-dialogue/jewish-christian-relations/pioneers-of-dialogue-in-the-modern-jewish-christian-relationship/claire-huchet-bishop-1899-1993>
- Schwartz, A. V. (1977). The Five Chinese Brothers: Time to retire. *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 8(3), 3–7.
- Sonja, A. (2024, July/August). *From China to the Mediterranean and more: Here's how different cultures envision dragons*. Smithsonian magazine. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/from-china-mediterranean-more-heres-how-different-cultures-envision-dragons-180984499/>
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52(6), 613–629. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.6.613>
- UCA Data Center. (n.d.). <https://ucausa.org/uca-data-center/>
- Venessa, K. S. (2021). *Embracing Cultural Diversity to Fight Racism Against African-Americans as Reflected in Selected Multicultural Children's Picture Books* [Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Andalas].
- Wang, H. (2019). Rethinking Translation of Children's Literature from Semiotic and Multimodal Perspectives: A Review of Translating Picturebooks. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 3, 124–129.
- Wang, J., & Lu, Q. (2017). Literature Review of Studies on Children's Picture Books. *Journal of Shaaxi Xueqian Normal University*, 12, 14–17.
- Wang, L. (2008). On the Picture Book and Preschool Language Education. *Studies in Preschool Education*, 7, 52–54.
- Wang, Z., & Shao, Y. (2024). Picture book reading improves children's learning understanding. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*. <https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/bjdp.12479>
- Wheeler, S. C., & Petty, R. E. (2001). The effects of stereotype activation on behavior: A review of possible mechanisms. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(6), 797–826.

- Wilson, J. (2014). Race representations in children's picture books and its impact on the development of racial identity and attitudes. *Western Libraries Undergraduate Research Award*, 4. https://cedar.wvu.edu/library_researchaward/4
- Xu, Y. (2005). Chinese American Culture—Chinese Culture in America. *Nankai Journal: Philosophy, Literature and Social Science Edition*, 2005(4), 39–42.
- Yu, Y. (2016). But How Do I Know If It Is Authentic? Examining Picture Books Representing Chinese Culture. *Best Practices for Education Professionals*, 2, 155–189. Apple Academic Press.
- Zheng, W. (2014). The Production of Visual Symbol's Meaning and the Influencing Factors in the Process. *Foreign Language Research*, 3, 19–23.

PICTURE BOOKS CITED

- Bishop, C. H., & Wiese, K. (1938). *The Five Chinese Brothers*. Putnam Juvenile.
- Chiu, K. (2014). *In the Forbidden City*. China Institute in America.
- Demi. (1996). *The empty pot*. Square Fish.
- Hao, K. T., & Wang, E. (1994). *Seven Magic Brothers*. Pan Asian Publications.
- Heye, M. (1989). *The Weaving of a Dream*. Puffin Books.
- Hillman, E., & Wallner, J. C. (1992). *Min-yo and the Moon Dragon*. Harcourt Children's Books.
- Li, J. (2012). *Water Dragon: A Chinese Legend*. Shanghai Press.
- Lin, G. (2019). *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers.
- Lin, G. (2014). *Dim Sum for Everyone*. Knopf Books for Young Readers.
- Lin, G. (2010). *Bringing in the New Year*. Dragonfly Books.
- Lin, G. (2001). *The Ugly Vegetables*. Charlesbridge.
- Mahy, M., Tseng, J., & Tseng, M. (1990). *The Seven Chinese Brothers*. Scholastic Inc.
- Mosel, A. (2007). *Tikki Tikki Tembo*. Square Fish.
- Roehl, T., Shimabukuro, D., & Disney Storybook Art Team. (2020). *Disney Before the Story: Mulan's Secret Plan*. Disney Press.
- Stock, C. (1984). *Emma's Dragon Hunt*. Lothrop Lee & Shepard.
- Tucker, K., & Lin, G. (2003). *The Seven Chinese Sisters*. Albert Whitman & Company.
- Wiese, K. (1948). *Fish in the Air*. Viking Press.
- Wiese, K. (1945). *You can write Chinese*. Viking Press.
- Wiesner, D. (1991). *Tuesday*. Clarion Books.
- Williams, J., & Mayer, M. (1984). *Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like*. Aladdin.
- Wong, J. S., & Chodos-Irvine, M. (2006). *Apple Pie Fourth of July*. HMH Books for Young Readers.